WHITE CASTLES

AND

OTHER STORIES

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HEINRICH'S WHITE CASTLES—PAGE 30.

THE WHITE CASTLES

AND

OTHER STORIES.

BY

POPULAR AUTHORS.

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HEINRICH'S WHITE CASTLES.

BY THE HON. MRS. GREENE.

PART I.

"SO you are going to part with little Heinrich?" asked Pierre Straus, as he stopped at the head of his kine of goats in front of Wilhelm the plasterer's door.

"Ay am I, or rather he is going to part from me; now that the little chap has got his senses back, he is craving and craving to be off; and why should I prevent him when he is neither kith nor kin of mine?"

"But why should he wish to leave you? that is what surprises me; what does he intend to do? where does he intend to go? and who will provide him with money or food—the

pauvre miserable, who has not got a sous in his pocket ?" asked Pierre in one breath.

" He is going to look for his mother, whom he is fully persuaded he will find in London ; and as for money, I am making him a couple of casts here, which I have little doubt will please the great London folks and bring him in no little silver ;" and Wilhelm, lifting a cauldron off the stove beside him, poured a thick white stream of plaster of Paris into the mould before him.

" Poor little chap !" observed Pierre kindly ; " so he is going to look for his mother, is he ? and in London too, ça-ca ; he might as well search for a chamois' tooth amongst the glaciers."

" So I say," replied Wilhelm, setting the cauldron back on the stove ; " but you might as well argue with yon plaster head of Mars. If I say, ' London is a big place and hard to search through,' he shakes his head and smiles. If I say, ' Perhaps she has left it,' he shakes his head and smiles also. If I say, ' Perhaps she is dead,' he throws himself on the ground

and weeps. Ah! poor little miserable! he has a heart like a ripe fig, which bleeds at the touch; but hush! here he comes.—Well, Heinrich, what merchandise have you made to-day? how did our new white castles please the folk in the town?"

"I sold two of them, and the people seemed greatly pleased; they stood in the street to see them go by."

"And what else, mon garçon?"

"A head of Mars and two trotting-horses, so you see I have done well to-day; besides, Father Wilhelm, I have heard good news in the town;" and Heinrich, setting the board in front of the chalet, looked up at Wilhelm with an earnest glance.

"Eh, that is well; what didst thou hear?"

"Monsieur François, the guard of the poste, has promised to take me free over the Jura, so I am saved that long walk, and I shall be so many miles nearer my mother."

The two men interchanged smiles, and Pierre Straus taking the boy by the hand, said kindly, "Listen to me, little Heinrich, and

believe that I speak for your good. Surely you cannot hope to find your mother in such a wide place as this big world of ours; would it not be wiser, my son, for you to stay with honest Wilhelm, who has been and is as good to you as either a father or a mother?"

"Father Wilhelm is very good," replied Heinrich, with a sad smile and an affectionate glance towards the plasterer; "he is very good, but"—

"But," continued Wilhelm, with a good-tempered laugh, "but I am not your mother; is it not so, Heinrich?"

Heinrich nodded his head; and Pierre continued inquisitively:

"Come, little fellow, and tell us; how do you intend to set about looking for her? you cannot knock at every door in the great city of London, and ask, 'Does my mother live within?'"

"That he could scarcely do," replied Wilhelm, "considering he does not even know his mother's name."

"You do not know your mother's name?"

Heinrich replied by a sad shake of the head.

"Then what hope can you have of finding her?"

"I remember her face," cried Heinrich, with a tremble in his voice, "and she remembers mine. I remember her face, and I will sing for her until I find her."

"Sing for her?"

"Yes; I will sing for her through all the streets until she hears me."

"Can he sing?" asked Pierre rather doubtfully.

"Ay can he, like a lark; sing for him, Heinrich, my child. Sing for good Pierre the song you sang for me last night ere you went to bed."

Heinrich was always accustomed to yield to Father Wilhelm's wishes, so he rose now from the little bench by the plasterer's door, and raising his eyes with an innocent longing to the sky above him, began in a sweet, clear, but intensely melancholy voice, the following song:

The daisies on the mountain side,
To heaven their eyes have opened wide;
The pastures on the hills are green,
The cold, cold snow no more is seen;
The goats come down to the châlet door,
But she comes home—ah! never more.
Mother dear, where art thou?

The rocks are high and the hills are steep,
And the eyes are weary which always weep;
But the land may be far, and the sea be wide,
And the eyes may grow blind which so long have cried.
Still I know I shall find her before I die,
For God will answer the orphan's cry.
Mother dear, where art thou?

When the little verse was sung, and the singer had sat down on the bench again, honest Pierre rubbed his eyes with the sleeve of his frieze coat, and putting his hand in his pocket drew out a rough chamois leather bag. "Here is a franc piece to add to the little chap's travelling store," he said, as thrusting his fingers into the pouch, he drew out with much fumbling a silver coin. "It were a pity he were crossed, and he with such a great faith in the good God, who no doubt hears the prayer of those who love Him."

"Thanks, Pierre.—Heinrich, my son, stand

up and lift off thy cap to Pierre Straus for his great kindness to thee."

Poor Heinrich stood up at the word of command, and took off his cap, but his mind, scarcely yet accustomed to be held in leash, had wandered off into a dreamland of his own; he stood there in the evening sunshine, with his fair hair hanging all uncombed in white curls on his shoulders, his tearful eyes still raised upwards, and a quiver on his lip, which spoke of an inward pain of mind with which a stranger might not meddle.

"Good evening, Heinrich. I wish you joy on your journey, and that you may find your poor mother, wherever she may be."

"Good evening, Monsieur Pierre," replied Heinrich, recovering at the sound of his mother's name; "when I have found her, she shall write and tell you the good news."

"Ay, do, my son; and there shall be a bonfire, I promise you, lit in the valley, the flames of which shall spread far and wide to tell the glad tidings."

Poor Heinrich! the search for his mother

did indeed appear, to all minds save his own, a hopeless one. She had left Switzerland two years before as maid in an English family, and save for one letter received by her son a fortnight after her departure, nothing had been heard of her since ; nor was it likely that anything more would be heard of her, for scarcely had the poor woman been settled a month in England, when the terrible tidings from the Valley des Bagnes reached her, that the great wall of ice at the head of the lake had burst, and the mass of waters which had been so long pent up behind it, had rushed down the valley, carrying everything before it. Trees, cattle, and houses were swept away in the turbid waves, and amongst others the châlet into which, with her own hands, but a month before, she had led little Heinrich with bitter tears, and committed him to the care of her aunt, a kind motherly woman, who, being childless, had offered to keep him free of expense, and take all possible care of him, till she should return with the necessary money, to secure him a good education and a trade.

Every search was set on foot by the distracted mother. She was allowed six weeks to prosecute it, and given the necessary funds for her journey by her indulgent master and mistress, with the permission to return were she unfortunate in the object she had in view. But vain were all her efforts ; a dreary silence reigned in the valley ; there was no cry to arise from amongst the blocks of granite and fir trees lying blasted on their sides. No child's voice lifted up pitifully as she passed on, to say, "Mother, come this way ; here perished thy little Heinrich ; here the cruel waters covered me ; but my last thoughts were of thee."

At the end of a fortnight Heinrich's mother returned to England a broken-hearted woman. She had not even a relic of the son she had lost ; not a last word, or a last look, to carry home in her heart. And ever before her eyes she saw the struggle for life in the turbulent waters, the cry for help when there was none near to save, and the pale lifeless form of her only child lying somewhere out of sight, a

prey to the wild creatures of the forest close by; for though some had recovered their dead, she had not been able to do so.

Poor Heinrich! there had been some one near to save when he cried in his sore distress. "The God of the fatherless and widow." When the first boom of the bursting dam was heard, and the first bright rush of waters came down the valley, carrying sunshine on its bosom, but death at its heart, Heinrich was on the hill-side, sitting among the goats, singing to himself in the beautiful child's treble for which he was already famous—singing little words and thoughts of his own tacked together in no unmelodious rhyme—when a sound like a distant roar of artillery high up among the lakes and glaciers, startled the boy from his reclining position among the heath-bells, and he sat up and listened. Then there was a great cry from the village; even the goats with an instinct of coming danger ceased to browse, and Heinrich, springing to his feet, saw already the gleam of the approaching waters as they hurried down the valley.

Women came out of the cottages and screamed, holding their babies to their breasts; men hurried down from their work in the fields, and taking their children by the hands, rushed madly forward towards the plain; whilst others, wiser in their trouble, made for the mountains. But Heinrich, aware of some danger, though scarcely realizing its full extent, hastened down the meadow into the châlet in search of his aunt, but she was nowhere to be found; and ere he could return to the châlet door, the waters were upon him. In a moment all was a wild confusion; the châlet walls, with an expiring groan, yielded to the pressure of the flood; the house rocked to and fro. Heinrich flung himself on his knees by the little bed where his mother had given the parting kiss, and lifted his eyes towards heaven, or rather to the patch of blue sky which was terribly visible through the shattered glass.

The lifting up of a child's eyes to heaven is the purest of all prayer, and God heard the unspoken words of poor Heinrich's appeal.

Many, many hours later, caught in the branches of a monster fir tree, which had done fierce battle with the water, and now lay stranded on its side, a poor plasterer, returning to his châlet on the mountain side, found the body of poor little Heinrich; he lifted it up tenderly, and carried it to his home, among the sweet-smelling pines; for though the blue chill of the waters was on the face, there was a throb of life in the young heart still. He carried it home; and though he was a poor deformed bachelor, living alone amongst the rocks and forest pines, God had given him a soft heart, and woman's hands, gentle and kind in their touch; and ere the morning dawned the fluttering pulse had steadied down, the light had returned to the wide-open eyes, and warmth to the dimpled cheek; but alas! the sudden shock, or the wound beneath the white curls, had robbed poor Heinrich of his little earnest mind, and all the quaintly diligent thoughts of love and peace, which up to this time had ever toiled on happily within it.

For one long year and a day this lull of

thought and energy had lasted; for one long year and a day good Wilhelm the plasterer had tended and fed and prayed by the little lad's bed. And then in the morning, when the birds were singing, and the goat-bells were tinkling on the hill side, in the early morning when the plasterer stooped over the bed, Heinrich asked for 'his mother.'

Since that morning another year and a day had rolled by, bringing each morning fresh strength and health to the boy; his thoughts gradually issued from the great mist which a sudden fear had brought upon them. He could understand all that Wilhelm said to him. He could go on messages into the neighboring town. He could drive the goats to pasture; but the past was a blank, an utter blank, save the one thing which lay like a glory on the darkness—his mother—his mother, with the fair hair and the quiet eyes, and the lips which had kissed his, and the voice which called unceasingly in his ears, "Heinrich, Heinrich, do not forget me!"

In the pocket of his little jerkin, almost

illegible from lying so long in the water, the plasterer found a letter without either address or signature. It began with the words, "Heinrich, my son," and ended with the name, 'Mother:' from this paper, as far as Wilhelm (who was no great scholar) could decipher, this letter had been written from some place either in the town of London or its suburbs. And this was all the intelligence or assistance he drew from it for poor Heinrich, as he sat opposite to him with earnest inquiring eyes. It was enough, however; and as Heinrich's mind and limbs recovered strength, so grew the firm intention to search for her even unto death.

At first Wilhelm had tried to wean the boy from his purpose. Was not this dove which had fluttered out of the great flood to his ark in the woods his own? had he not warmed it in his bosom, and given to it the great love of a great heart? But then, again, was not it an honest heart as well as a kind one? and was not it his duty, if indeed this mother still lived, to allow the boy to seek out the one to whom

he really belonged, and lay the olive branch in her bosom, which must be rifled from his own?

So the moment for the parting had come; and though the resolution was strong in Wilhelm's spirit, the flesh was very weak. As he waved his cap to the little lad seated on high beside the conductor of the diligence, there were tears of compassion in the eyes of many, when the plasterer, staggering back to the bench beside the wooden pump at the inn door, covered his face with his leathern apron and wept.

PART II.

"WHITE CASTLES! who will buy my white castles? Good ladies and little children, white castles for sale!"

It was a bright night in the great city of London—a bright night, on which moon and stars were visible, and the white snow a foot deep on the ground. But with all its brightness it was a bad night for Heinrich's trade; for when the moon shone one could scarcely notice the white houses which he carried on his head; but when all was dark, how beautiful they looked with their stained glass windows and the soft light burning inside!

There was scarcely a child or a woman in the Camden Town direction who did not know already the plaintive cry of the boy's voice as it came up the street, and many an eager little hand unbolted the shutter or drew back the blind to see the mysterious castles pass by, with their lighted turrets and oriel windows; or better still, if the boy, seeing a stir at the window, stopped beneath and sang for them, as he sometimes did, in a voice so clear, and yet full of melancholy, that the children listened entranced, and mothers who had sons of their own wiped the tears from their eyes.

It was a thriving trade, this of the white castles, and Father Wilhelm had not been so far astray when he said he thought he would please the great London folk with his wares. Heinrich had already sold over a hundred of his white moulds, and if money alone had been his object in coming to settle in this busy foreign town, he was well repaid. Not a night but he sold two or three of the castles, realizing on each mould a sum of a shilling; so he had enough money for his lodging, and yet to

put aside each day a small sum towards darker or happier hours.

Poor Heinrich! he did not seem to thrive on his success. He had been now three months in London, and already there was such a change in the soft rounded cheeks and the childish eyes, that Wilhelm would have wept had he met him in the street; and yet he had fallen into kind hands again in London. He was lodging with an old Italian modeller, by name Salvi, in the outskirts of Camden Town, who was as good to him as man could be; but the sudden change from blue skies, bracing air, and the smell of sweet pine trees, to the smoke, fog, and roar of London, seemed to have told upon the boy; and the little gentle heart, so full of a lively purpose, and a livelier courage, had sunk day by day, and the mind, which had grown strong in hope, threatened now to faint back to its original weakness.

With the unreasoning confidence of a child, Heinrich had expected to find his mother within at least a few days of his arrival; but now his heart had sunk, when not only day by

day went by, but week by week, without any intelligence of her, and worse still, time only served to recall to him the magnitude of the task he had undertaken, for London and its suburbs seemed now to his unpractised eyes to occupy a greater space of this earth than the great range of the Jura which had stretched beyond his former home. Still there was no irresolution, no wavering of purpose, no long sighs after the green pastures and tinkling of goat-bells; no, all that remained of hope and energy was still concentrated on the one object—his mother; and in search of her he started out each evening, taking by the modeller's advice every week a new portion of the great city on whose confines they lived.

The summer weather and the sunshine had by this time faded away altogether, and in its place had come fog, rain, and daily darkness, and now again snow and a chilling frost. Heinrich has grown to a mere shadow now. There were high cheek-bones where baby's dimples had lain before, and hope had almost disappeared from the blue eyes, and in its

place had come a listless melancholy which could at times darken into pain, and at other times frightened the affectionate heart of old Salvi with their meaningless appeal.

"My son, what hast thou?" said Salvi one morning, as he noticed the boy sitting for more than an hour motionless in front of one of the white castles he was in the habit of carrying on his head, and staring into its stained glass windows with an earnestness which produced tears. "My son, what hast thou? Come, rouse thyself. I cannot work all day while thou sittest idle: of what thinkest thou, with thy great blue eyes full of salt-water?"

Heinrich started round from his reverie, and looked at the modeller's face, a sharp face with hooked nose, and beetling brows, but kind eyes beneath them.

"Of what thinkest thou, I say? Come, stir this pot of plaster, and thyself at the same time."

Heinrich rose from the bench, and drew near the fire by which the plasterer stood; it

was a cold day, the snow was falling heavily outside, but the boy had not noticed it.

The old man's voice had been rough, but there was a kindly gleam in the gray eyes when Heinrich, laying his white hand on his own brown and sinewy arm, said, in an earnest, anxious tone, as if following out his former thoughts:

"Monsieur Salvi, are there any white buildings—castles, I mean—in London?"

"White castles, eh, lad? what a question, to be sure! There is not a castle in all the city I know of except Windsor Castle, and that's a bit outside the town, and more gray than white. Why, what hast thou got in thy head now?"

It was the same answer he always gave—poor Heinrich!—"My mother. I dreamt last night I saw her in yon white castle on the shelf. I saw her quite plainly with her yellow hair and her black dress, and she opened the window when I cried, and called me by my name."

"Well, and what then? a dream is only a

dream," replied Salvi kindly. "Thou canst not hope, poverino, by staring at yon block of plaster, to see thy mother come forth. Ché, ché! I tell thee, little Heinrich, if thou goest on at this pace, when the good God gives her back to thee, thou wilt not be worth the caring for, but just a bit of a shadow who will slip through her arms when she seeketh to hold thee the tightest."

Heinrich looked up into the kind old face which was bent over him, and smiled one of the strange sweet smiles which came so seldom now; the thoughts suggested by the modeller's words were not altogether full of pain; and presently, as if to assure himself of how much they were worth, he asked almost in a whisper, "Then thou thinkest, good Salvi, that God will give her back to me?"

"Don't ask me what I think," he replied quickly; "thy faith is great, and God is good: God is good—that ought to be enough both for you and me. If He thinks well of it, thou wilt have her; and if not, what then? Life seems, no doubt, a bit long to the young; but,

Cospetto, thou dost not seem to have much of it left in thy poor little body."

All that long day it snowed, and all the long night too, and for many days and nights afterwards; so that Heinrich was obliged to keep in-doors for a whole week, without being able to sell a single castle, or to prosecute his search.

But at length there came a lull in the storm, and a hard frost set in, making the snow sufficiently firm for Heinrich to attempt walking upon it.

Although it was early morning, Heinrich declared his intention of setting off at once, with his board of white castles balanced carefully on the top of his head. Old Salvi pleaded that they looked like so many white-washed stables in the daylight; but Heinrich, who seemed to have a fixed purpose of his own, persevered in his intention, and going out into the cold street, turned off in the direction of the city.

Whether it was the bright sun coming out after so many days of gloom and darkness, or

whether it was owing to the clear crisp feeling of the air, poor Heinrich's heart was full of a strange eager hope as he started on his journey into the town, and little joyous bursts of song issued unconsciously through his lips as he walked along.

A strange fancy had taken possession of his head, that to-day he would meet somewhere the White Castle of his dreams; for not only had he dreamt of it once, but every night: the first object which haunted his sleep on lying down was the White Castle he had seen in his first dream, with his mother's face at the window.

Heinrich had not hoped to sell much during the day-time, especially with the clear white snow on the ground, which made even his castles look buff-colored and dingy; but he had not proceeded very far into the city, when he was stopped by a servant standing at the door of a carriage, and desired to show his wares.

Heinrich lowered his board, and stood with uncovered head before the carriage window;

while a young, pretty-looking mother, with her child on her knee, minutely examined the plaster models which good Wilhelm had made for him in the pine-wood long ago.

"How much is this white house?" she said at length, fixing on the more modern of the two buildings.

"One shilling and sixpence, good madame," replied Heinrich civilly.

"I will take it, then."

"Ah, mother dear, don't buy that one; buy me instead the white castle," said the little girl, raising her head painfully from her mother's shoulder, and stretching out a little thin white hand; "buy me the white castle instead, it is so like our own house—our own white castle on the hill."

Heinrich took one of the plaster houses from his board, and handed it in at the carriage window. "There, miss," he said, "you can have this one for yourself—I will give it you; only be so kind, I pray, to tell me where is the White Castle on the hill, that I may search for it by-and-by until I find it."

"Ah! you would never find it; our home is a long way off, at Norwood, a long, long day's walk for a little boy like you!"

The lady insisted on paying Heinrich for the two castles taken from his board, and the coroneted carriage rolled off, leaving little Heinrich standing with his fair hair still all uncovered on his shoulders, and his eyes fixed on the opposite houses in a kind of trance.

But by-and-by he shouldered his board again, and set off on his journey—"a long, long day's walk!" the little girl had said pitifully, as she looked into Heinrich's sad eyes, and then laid her head down again on her mother's shoulders; and a long, long day's walk it was for poor Heinrich, who, constantly asking his way, and constantly pressing forward, drew at length a little nearer to the southerly suburbs of London.

The short winter day had long ago darkened into night, and now the stars overhead were shining, with a promise, by the yellow dawn in the east, of a moon. Heinrich was so tired and hungry, he could walk no further without

some food and rest. He turned into a baker's shop, and setting his board down on a far counter, purchased a penny roll, and sat down to eat it. After a minute or two, overcome by fatigue, he fell asleep: the baker had pity on the poor boy, and did not wake him; he had a son at home who was weak and ailing, and the pale weary face of little Heinrich, as he slept, with his white hair hanging over the rails of the chair, touched the good man's heart. At last he woke, as the clock in the shop struck nine, and gazing all around him bewilderedly, rose to his feet.

The baker came forward, and helped to lift the board of castles on his head. Then he said kindly, as he put a couple of buns in the boy's pocket, "Get home now, lad, for thou art tired."

"How far is it to Norwood?" asked Heinrich, with a tired sigh as he moved towards the shop-door.

"To Norwood, lad! why, it is half a day's journey still; you are never going to walk to Norwood to-night, in the cold and the snow?"

"I must go," said Heinrich feverishly; "I want to find my mother."

"Your mother—poor little chap! Ah! if your mother is waiting for you, you had better hurry on."

To Heinrich, in his weak and overwrought frame of mind, these words of the baker's seemed to take possession of his mind, and ring in his ears—"Your mother is waiting for you, you had better hurry on;"—and so, plucking up a little fresh strength, he pressed forward on his self-imposed journey.

PART III.

"MARIE! what was that cry I heard in the distance?"

"Hush, my sweet Mademoiselle! I heard no cry. Close thy little eyes, and seek for sleep; it is past midnight."

"But, Marie, I do not care to sleep, for my dreams frighten me. I dreamt only a minute ago that the white castle at the foot of my bed was on fire, and that I saw the poor little boy in the flames; and then I awoke, and thought I heard him crying down there in the street."

"Perhaps I had better move the castle out

of thy sight, Mademoiselle; or shall I blow out the light which is burning inside it?"

"No, no, good Marie, do not touch it, please; only come and sit beside me, and I will talk to you about the little boy until the dream goes out of my head."

Marie rose from her chair at the foot of the little crib, where she had been seeking to read by the dim colored light that issued through the windows of the plaster castle, and took her seat by the sick child.

"Marie, listen to me."

"Well, Mademoiselle."

"I would like to sit upon your knee; the bed is so hot, and my head is aching."

"Poor child! I fear the drive in the cold this morning has increased thy fever. Wait a moment till I light a candle, and find thy flannel shawl to wrap round thy shoulders, and then thou shalt sit on my lap, and I will sing thee to sleep."

"Canst thou sing, Marie?"

"Long ago, Mademoiselle, I sang a little, but I have not tried lately." Marie stooped

over the bed, and with a heavy sigh lifted out the little girl. "Where shall we sit, Mademoiselle?"

"Oh! by the window. I want to look across the lawn down into the street, for perhaps the little boy will come to-night."

"At this hour of the night, Mademoiselle, all little boys are in bed and asleep, as you ought to be, ma pauvre;" and Marie stroked the burning cheek which lay against her bosom, and kissed it.

"Marie, he had such a sweet kind face, and long white curls which hung upon his shoulders."

"Who, my child?"

"The boy who carried the white houses on his head—and such a white face, and large blue eyes, which were full of tears."

"He must have been in trouble, poor child!" said Marie, with another long heavy sigh, which ended almost in a groan.

"Do you know, Marie, who I thought of when I saw him?"

"No, Mademoiselle."

"I thought of your son, little Heinrich, who was drowned."

"Hush! dear child, we will not speak of him. I trust poor Heinrich knows no trouble now, neither hath he tears in his eyes."

"Yes," replied the little girl softly, "Heinrich has no trouble now; but the boy in the street has plenty, I am sure, for his hands and his face were so thin, and his voice sounded like crying; he was a French boy, too, for he spoke like you, Marie, and looked in the same sad way."

"Do I look sad, Mademoiselle?"

"Sometimes. But hush! Marie, did you not hear that cry again? I wish you would open the window and listen; I do not like to think that boy is crying in the street."

"I durst not open the window; the night air would chill the room, and give thee fresh cold. There are no boys crying in the street at this hour of the night—at least, God send it may not be so. Go to sleep, my precious one."

There was a silence in the room for some

time. The pale woman, with the fair hair and black dress, rocked to and fro in her arms the sick child, whose quick panting breath spoke of the fever within; and presently the little wailing voice of pain broke the hush of the nursery.

"Marie, my head aches; did not you say you would sing?"

"I will try, Mademoiselle."

"'The birds in the branches do sing their young to sleep;
My little bird is in his nest, why should I weep?
Why should I weep and wail, why break my heart?
Shall we not meet again, never to part?'"

"Marie, you are crying; I felt your tears falling on my face. Are you thinking of your little Heinrich?"

"I am thinking of him—I am always thinking of him;" and the words ended in a sob.

"Marie, look! what are those lights moving far down there in the street—those colored lights far down by the church?"

"I see nothing, Mademoiselle, only the moon shining on the point of the steeple."

"No, no, lower down; look lower down,

Marie, there are colored lights moving along the street. It is the boy with the white castles. I am sure it is; he said he would come."

"She raves, pauvre enfant," said Marie in a whisper, as she drew the child closer to her. "There, Mademoiselle Alice, turn thy head from the window, and lean it against my bosom."

"No, Marie; for if I sleep I shall hear that cry again, I know I shall."

"You will not hear it, my child, for I will carry you up and down the room in my arms. There, m'âmie, let us try." And rising from the window, Marie paced the room up and down with slow measured steps, till at length the gentle movement took effect over the feverish fancies of the child, and she fell into a sleep, in which the more subdued and easier breathing gave promise of a healthier awakening; and Marie, laying the little girl quietly back into bed, took her seat by the window, and tears, no longer held under restraint, poured down her cheeks in the moonlight.

Poor Marie! the old trouble had been stirred deeply to-night, and she knew it would be useless to lie down and seek for that sleep which came so seldom now at her bidding; besides, it would be well to sit by the little girl's bed, and watch the decline of the fever. Hush! what was that in the street below? Was it that cry again which had disturbed poor Alice's slumbers? Marie listened, and wiping the tears from her eyes, strained down the long road towards the church. She could see the figure now: it was a boy; he was standing opposite a low house on a terrace, and singing. The song came up on the still air like a long-drawn wail of sorrow, but the air was a familiar one.

What could bring a poor boy out at this hour of the night, so desolate and lonely, carrying his wares on his head, and singing?

What indeed? Only the good God in the sky above, He who had led little Heinrich all the long day, and guided him on his way all the long weary night—only the good God who answers the prayer of faith—knew why.

Meantime, what had become of the poor lad, and how had he fared since waking also from a troubled dream? He had left the baker's shop, and gone out, lonely, tired, and half despairing, yet ever urged on by the baker's words, through the desolate snow-bound streets.

The morning had begun with hope, the evening had closed in with disappointment; the night air was full of a piercing frost, and his limbs were heavy from the unusual amount of walking, and the difficulty he had experienced in maintaining a firm footing on the slippery pavement.

He had sold but the two castles since early in the morning, the two castles bought from him by the lady in the carriage; so he could not lift the board from his head and carry it under his arm, as was his custom on his return home when all his wares were disposed of.

Added to all this, there was the uncomfortable thought that he must pass the rest of the night in the street; for he could not, even were he to turn now, reach Salvi's house before

daybreak, and there would be no one abroad in the lonely streets to show him at every step what turn he must take. Neither would he trust himself in an unknown lodging-house; so still keeping the southernly direction towards Norwood, he pressed on.

One by one the lights in the houses and buildings he passed by on his journey were extinguished; foot-passengers became fewer and fewer; the snow lay deep on the roofs and pavements, till it seemed almost to little Heinrich he was walking in a white world of plaster of Paris.

At last the clock in the nearest church struck twelve; the streets were growing less and less entangled, and there were glimpses of country fields covered with snow, and phantom trees growing on a hill side. Just that he might hear the sound of a human voice, or with some vain hope lurking somewhere in his breast, he stopped and cried out into the night air, "Castles, white castles for sale! good ladies and little children, white castles for sale!" And once, when he saw a shadow

cast on a blind in an upper room, he stopped and sang; but the blind was not drawn back, nor did a face come to the window, so he passed on more disheartened than ever.

He continued walking forward for a long time in a reverie of pain, watching the painful reflection cast on the snow before him by the castles on his head—till all at once with a start he stopped in his walk, and paused while his heart beat fast and strong. What was that white building high up on the hill, with its turrets and oriel windows, and a steady light burning in an upper room? Surely this was the castle of his dreams, and the home of the little girl he had seen in the carriage. Heinrich felt a rush of hope at his heart, and hurried on. It would have been difficult to tell why this hope arose so strangely and unreasonably in his breast; but it *was* there, that was all he knew, and he would test its value.

The gate, an iron one, with a white turret on either side, was only on the latch; there was no lodge, no dog to bark, or anything to

hinder his approach ; but the hill was—oh ! so steep, and the little limbs so weary.

"White castles ! ladies and little children, buy my white castles ! white castles for sale !"

But the building in front of which poor Heinrich stood was still and silent as the mock ones upon his head, and no sign spoke of life within, save the light burning in the upper window.

"White castles ! ladies and little children, white castles for sale !"

Heinrich kept his eyes fixed steadily on the window above him, for a figure had passed across the room, and paused for a moment at the window. It was the figure of a woman, tall, slight, and young, who, bending forward, shaded her eyes with her hand, and looked down upon him ; a thrill of a wild despair or wilder hope passed over little Heinrich with a shudder, as the figure disappeared again from the window, and the light was suddenly extinguished.

Then, like the song of the dying swan, Heinrich seemed to collect all his strength

for one last effort. He took the board from his head, and placed it on the ground at his feet; then taking a step further back, so that he might see better were the light to reappear, he began the old Swiss air which he had sung many months ago in front of Wilhelm the plasterer's châlet.

High and sweet and plaintive it rose with its simple and touching melody, till at the final words—

> "I know I shall see her before I die,
> For God will hear the orphan's cry of
> Mother dear! where art thou?"

There was a stir—a stir so slight, it might have been the fall of a snow-laden leaf to the ground, but Heinrich heard it. The light which had disappeared from the upper window shone now in a room lower down; there was a shadow on the wall, which moved forwards toward the unshuttered window.

Poor Heinrich! could Wilhelm have seen him at this moment, with his white hair all uncovered, his white face raised, his white lips parted, and his eyes fixed in a trance of

expectation, he would surely forthwith have modelled him for a statue pure and beautiful of "Faith." But this motionless silence was not for long; the sash of the window beneath which he stood was raised, and a voice out of the dead past crept out into the still night air, and said, in the long-forgotten accents of his native tongue, "Heinrich, my son, my son! if thou art indeed my son, draw near that I may see thee!"

Then it seemed to little Heinrich as if the White Castle stooped down to meet him, and that music came out through the open window where he had seen his mother's face; and he said to himself, with a groan, "This is again a dream, and the awaking is near."

But it was no dream; the castle did not bend, nor did music come out through the open window; but when Heinrich opened his eyes, his mother was stooping to kiss him, and the music of her voice was in his ears.

* * * * * *

Pierre Straus was as good as his word. When the good news reached the town that

Heinrich's mother was found, a flame bright enough to light up the blocks of granite on the Jura's side blazed in the valley; but a larger one still crimsoned the hills, and tinted even the snow on the nearest peak with crimson, when Heinrich and his mother, stepping down from the diligence, clasped with a hearty welcome the honest hand of Wilhelm the plasterer, and promised, amidst tears of gratitude and smiles of unspeakable happiness, that as long as God should spare him to their love and care they would never part from him again.

THE NEW-YEAR GIFTS:

OR

DREAMS AND REALITY.

A TALE OF THE WINTER OF 1870 IN PARIS.

BY

"QUODDY."

THE NEW-YEAR GIFTS.

CHAPTER I.

IT was New-Year's day—the day of all the year in gay, laughter-loving Paris. The streets were filled with handsome carriages; and crowds, gay and lively as only French people can be, thronged the pavements, and clustered round the shops, which were even more than usually attractive with their windows full of beautiful objects, suited to every taste and age. On this day in Paris every one gives, and receives gifts, of all sorts and descriptions, from diamonds to bonbons.

Not only do the rich and great keep high

festival to-day—but the middle-classes and poor are also making holiday.

Groups of the latter, men and boys in blouses, women and little girls alike wearing snowy caps, are flocking into the Champs Elysée, and other promenades and places of public amusement; every face radiant with enjoyment, and every tongue in motion.

Nothing is more delightful in France than to see the hearty, simple family affection displayed by "the people" on an occasion of this sort. Father, mother, and children take their pleasure together, and seem alike joyous and light-hearted, laughing and exchanging good-humored jokes and retorts with their neighbors, in a way which seems strange to English eyes, accustomed only to our more reserved, gloomy, and self-conscious national manners. In fact a French crowd seems on such occasions to make pleasure their business, while we usually reverse it, and make a serious business of our pleasure.

It is, as I have said, the evening of New-

Year's day, and now many of the holiday makers are returning home.

Among these is a woman, whose calm, gentle face is lighted up by smiles as she listens to the chatter of the two children, who have each seized her by a hand, and are prattling merrily over the day's adventures. They have been to St. Cloud, and have had, as the little girl is saying, "a truly charming day," have ridden the hobby-horses, seen a conjurer, listened to a band of music, danced under the trees, and now, full of laughter and happiness, are returning home, discussing all the fun they have had.

"Has it not been a perfect day, mother dear?" and the little girl who spoke pressed her mother's hand between both her own.

The mother smiled, and looked down at the child whose figure was one spring of delight, and whose black eyes were literally dancing with glee.

"Yes, truly, Clarette, it has been a happy day, and I am glad you have enjoyed it so well. Has my little Jean been happy too?"

she said, looking down at the little boy trotting by her other side.

He answered with a little shiver of assent, by which French children express great delight, and replied, in his sweet, shrill little voice:

"Ah! *Vraiment*, (truly,) mamma."

"That is well," said their mother; "and so you will no longer grieve, Clarette, that you received no etrennes (New-Year's gifts) but mine, this morning."

Clarette hung her head, as she answered, softly:

"Ah! mamma, I was naughty. It was because the shops were so beautiful, and there seemed so many nice things in the world that it seemed hard we could have none of them. It was so bad of me;" and the child looked up at her mother with tears in her eyes as she spoke, "when the good God has given us you to take care of us. We might have been like poor Pierre."

"Poor Pierre!" said her mother, "where is he to-day, I wonder? I wish I had thought

yesterday of asking him to come with us, but I was sure he would be at the gate this morning, as usual. I hope the poor boy is not ill."

By this time they had got out of the crowd, and had turned down a street, which was quiet and empty, so that talking, or at least listening, was easier than among the crowd in the boulevard they had just left.

"Mother," said Clarette, suddenly, "why does God give so much more to some people than to others?"

"What do you mean, my little one?" asked her mother.

"Why, see! The little girl of Madame La Marquise this morning got twenty presents; her bonne told me so. Then Marie Morette had a new dress, and a doll, and oh! ever so many things. Then Jean and I had only your present. I don't mean to complain, mamma dear," and the child looked up at her mother with eyes full of love, "only to tell you what I mean."

"I know, my dear," said her mother kindly. "Well?"

"Well! then there is Pierre. He has had no present, I know, for his father never gives him anything, not even food. Now why does God make so much difference?"

The widow Blampied waited a moment before she replied. Too well she knew how often and how bitterly that question had been asked in France—the fearful scenes it had given rise to, when men goaded by suffering, or wild with evil passions of hate and envy, had taken the task of "making the rough places smooth" into their own hands; and she almost trembled as she heard the question which had roused so many demons of disorder and cruelty, drop from the lips of her little daughter.

When she spoke, it was to ask another question:

"Do you always know, Clarette, why I do things—why, for instance I give you one thing, and Jean another, and sometimes refuse you altogether what you want, and what I could give you?"

"No, mamma, but I know you give us what is best for us."

"I trust so, my little one. You trust me and know what I do is best. So must we trust God, and believe that He who loves us all alike, makes some rich, and some poor, gives some plenty, others little. It does not come by chance, but from God; so we know that it is best, though *why*, we cannot see. Yet must we not rebel against His will, but strive to be content and grateful. And we must never think, my little Clarie, that what others have He takes from us. If Marie Morette had had no new dress or doll to-day, that would not have given them to you, so why should you mind?"

"I don't mind her having them, mamma dear," said Clarette, earnestly, "only I do not see *why* God should give so very, very much to some, and next to nothing to others."

"And I cannot tell you why it is, Clarette, but I know it is for a good reason, for the good God does all things well. But think for a moment, suppose every one was as poor as we are, who would build churches, and hospitals, and give food and clothing to the old

and sick? And then again, if all were rich as Madame La Marquise, who would do the work of the world, and how selfish all would be, for none would need help, so that there would be nothing to make us think of others instead of ourselves."

Clarette agreed that there was something in this, but continued as if still dissatisfied.

"But why don't rich people do more for those who are poor, mamma? If I were rich like Madame La Marquise, how I should like to make poor people happy, by giving them the things they need so much!"

"And so many rich people do, my child," answered her mother, earnestly. "It is rich people who give money to the good sisters to enable them to teach poor children like you, and nurse the sick, and give soup to the poor old people who cannot work."

"Yes," said the child, "but they keep a great deal for themselves. They are so selfish. Yes, the bonne told me that her little lady would not give away one of her twelve dolls. Now that's selfish, isn't it?"

"But are not poor children selfish sometimes, Clarie?" asked her mother, meaningly.

Clarette blushed. "Yes, I know; but, mamma, we have so little to give. When you give away anything we all have to go without what we really want. It is not so with the rich?"

"We cannot tell that, my child," answered Madame Blampied. "Pierre, perhaps, thinks *we* are able to give without inconvenience to ourselves, because we have a comfortable room, and better clothes and food than he has; yet we know how often a little almsgiving makes us feel very poor, and very discontented too," she added, with a smiling look at her little daughter, who replied cheerfully:

"Yes, mother, I see; and perhaps the rich people have more to do with their money than we know; but oh! I think it must be so nice to be able to help poor people. I don't mean just to give a sou or two, or a bit of bread to some one, but to really help poor people, and make them happy.

"Why should you like it, my dear?"

"Because it would be so noble, so grand, like the holy saints Sister Marie tells us of, who gave everything they had to God, and the poor, and spent their lives in doing good. Do rich people ever do that now, mamma?"

"I don't know, my dear child; but we have ourselves to think of, not other people. If it is right to make sacrifices, to do great and noble things, the poor can and ought to do so as well as the rich."

Clarette opened wide her big black eyes.

"Then could I ever do a great, noble thing, mamma—something like the holy saints?"

"Perhaps you may, my child; but this I know, that you can always make little sacrifices, little offerings, which will please God, and make you able to do great things if God gives you the opportunity. Remember that, my child. Little faults neglected become great sins, little good deeds done, become great actions."

Clarette blushed and was silent.

She was very fond of imagining *great* things

which she would do if she were only grown up, or rich, or had lived long ago; in fact if she had been anybody but poor little Clarette Blampied; but the "little deeds of kindness, the little words of love," were too often forgotten, or neglected, as she herself knew. But her wish to please God and help others had really a true root in her heart, was not merely a passing desire; so, as her mother began to talk to little Jean, who was beginning to be tired and impatient of the long conversation with his sister, she thought to herself:

"I will try and remember about little things, and then, perhaps God will give me a real great thing to do some day. Sister Marie told us yesterday we should begin the New-Year with a new resolution, and this shall be mine: to do all I can to help others."

Presently her thoughts took another turn, and she said:

"If Pierre should be at the gate, mamma, may he come in to supper?"

"That he may," said her mother, cordially.

"I would willingly give the boy a little wholesome pleasure, and you can give him the little cross we bought for him to-day."

"Do you really think he will like it?" asked the child, anxiously. "Poor Pierre! he does not know much, but when you told him at Christmas, about the Holy Jesus, and took him to mass, I am sure he liked it."

"I hope he did, Clarie, and the little cross will keep him in mind of it, perhaps; but see, here we are at home. Poor little Jean, he is very tired;" and the mother bent down and lifted the weary child in her arms. It was a strange place for people, poor as they were, to call home. A tall, handsome house, separated from the street by a wide paved court, into which one entered through a stately gateway."

Surely too grand a place for any but rich folks to live in, we should think; but in Paris one roof often covers many varieties of fortune and degree. In that large mansion half a dozen families live, all differing from one another in wealth and rank. The first flat,

consisting of a suite of splendidly furnished apartments, belonged to the Marquis and Marquise de Quesne, and the second, scarcely less magnificent, to a rich widow lady, Madame Lebrun. The third was occupied by less wealthy people; the fourth was let off to people of a lower rank of life—music-teachers, clerks, etc.—while the fifth, or garret, consisted of four large rooms, one of which was the Blampied's home, and the others were occupied by people poor as they were.

Widow Blampied was a needlewoman, and supported by her skill and industry, herself and her two children, who were at once the anxiety and delight of her life.

She now toiled up the five long flights of stairs, carrying the four-year old Jean, while Clarette ran behind her—ran, that is to say, up the first two staircases, but after that her feet dragged heavily; the fatigue of a long day's pleasuring made each flight seem twice as long as usual—till by the time she came to the last landing it seemed as if she had dropped all her brightness by the way. But,

a second afterwards, her smiles came back and fatigue was forgotten, for the door opposite their own opened, and a boy, or rather youth of about sixteen, came towards them, holding out a basket to Clarette, and saying, with shy abruptness :

"There, little one, that is for you."

"Oh, Pierre !" and the little girl sprang to his side. "Where *have* you been all day? We have been to St. Cloud, and wanted you to come with us so much !"

"Yes, indeed, Pierre," said Madame Blampied kindly. "We wished to spend our New-Year's day with you ; but come in now, and have supper with us."

The boy blushed with mingled shyness and pleasure, but after a glance at the neat room, and the clean holiday dresses of his friends, and then at his own torn, ragged clothes, he shook his head, and turned away, saying :

"Ah ! no, Madame, it is too good. I cannot, but thank you all the same for thinking of poor Pierre."

"Oh, but you must indeed," said Clarette,

taking one of his large, hard hands between her two little soft ones and pulling him towards the door; "you must come, for I have something for you, and we want to tell you what we did to-day."

Thus urged, Pierre entered their room, and when she had thus gained her point, Clarette gave way to her curiosity as to what was in the basket which she held on her arm; and summoned Jean to help her unfasten it. It was a pretty sight to see the two children standing by the chair on which the basket had been placed, and with flushed, eager faces, and fingers that trembled with excitement, untying the stout twine which fastened the cover tightly down.

"It moves, it moves!" cried Jean, ecstatically; "it is something alive, Clarie!" and he started back, half frightened.

But the brave Clarette, with her hopes of a realized dream rising higher and higher, untied the last knot, lifted the cover, and saw —Oh, joy of joys, her very heart's desire, a gray kitten, which rose from its soft bed of

hay, hunching up its back with a yawn, and with a gentle mew fixed its round blue eyes on Clarette's delighted face.

"Oh you darling!" she exclaimed, "mother —Jean—it is a kitten, a gray kitten, the very thing I have wanted for so long! Oh! Pierre, Pierre, how good, how kind of you!" And almost frantic with delight, she caught up the soft gray ball of fur, and covered it with kisses.

It was, indeed, what she had been desiring for months—a kitten of her very own,—a gray one with white shirt-front and stockings, and here was the perfect realization of her ideal puss. Her rapture at its appearance, and her gratitude to Pierre were so great, that the kitten was in danger of being smothered with the caresses showered upon it, as an outlet for her excitement; while little Jean, scarcely less delighted, stroked and kissed its stiff, little gray tail, which was the only part of which he could obtain possession.

At length, when pussy, after many plaintive mews, had been driven to use the needle-like

claws hidden in her soft paws, she was released to show off her beauties as she gambolled about the room and drank the milk which Madame Blampied had already poured out for her.

Then Clarette turned to Pierre and inquired eagerly where he had got the "little treasure," "the darling," and after much questioning discovered he had spent his holiday in a long expedition in search of an old woman who lived some distance out of Paris, whom he had some acquaintance with, and who he had heard possessed some cats of a remarkably fine breed.

From her he obtained this kitten, at what cost he did not tell Clarette, at the price of so large a part of his little savings that the new blouse in which he had hoped to appear at church the next Sunday, would be an impossibility for some weeks longer.

But he did not give a thought of regret to that, nor to his long day's walk, as he watched Clarette's unbounded delight. Madame Blampied was hardly less grateful than her

little daughter; for, mother-like, a kindness to her child was more acceptable than any service rendered to herself; and there were tears in her eyes as she handed Pierre his coffee, saying:

"May the good God bless those who care for the fatherless little ones! Thou hast a good heart, Pierre."

"It is you who have been good," cried the boy, impulsively. "What have I done? but you—who, but you ever says a kind word to me!" and with national demonstrativeness, the boy seized the good woman's hand and pressed it to his lips.

"Nonsense, nonsense!" said Madame, drawing it away, and recovering her usual calm self-composure, as she patted him on the shoulder. "There, there! drink thy coffee; we will say no more about it, but as friends should, agree to take kindness from each other. Come, Clarette, Jean, leave the kitten, and eat your suppers."

They obeyed their mother's summons to the table; but pussy was Clarette's supper that

night; she had no ears or eyes for anything else, till the merry little thing had curled itself up again in its basket, and fallen asleep, and then its mistress had leisure to pour out the tale of her holiday doings into Pierre's attentive ear.

Pierre was one of the street boys of Paris, *gamins* as they are called; wild, untaught, mischievous, and alas! wicked little creatures, who without care, love, education or restraint, pass their days, and often their nights in the streets, picking up a scanty livelihood in various ways, more or less honest; and usually growing out of a heedless, wild, and reckless childhood, into a godless, idle, and desperate manhood. They are either without parents, or have forsaken, or been forsaken by them; each one looks after himself, and becomes precocious in every evil thing, hardened and deadened to all that is good, at an age when the mind should be still innocent and ignorant of the wickedness of the world.

This was the brotherhood to which Pierre belonged; and yet he was not quite so bad as

this. He had had a good mother who had lived till he was nine years old, and whose teaching and example still had some place in his memory, and aided by the many prayers, which had been offered up by her for her little son, kept him from much that would have been his ruin, amid strong temptation, and with no earthly aid to guide him right.

His father, whose wickedness and cruelty had hastened, if not caused his mother's death, cared for no one but himself, and turned his son into the streets to earn or steal, he cared not which, so that he himself need not work in order to gratify his love of drink; and as the poor child too often returned empty handed, he was treated with such cruelty, that unable to bear it, he at last ran away. From that day he had lived entirely in the streets, feeling quite alone in the world, and until the past few months without a soul to take a kindly interest in him. In some way he then became known to the old porter, who frequently gave him employment, in the way of running messages, and such like little

jobs, and in this way Madame Blampied began to take notice of him; and something in his expression reminding her of a little brother, long since dead, she almost unconsciously took a strong interest in the lad, and little by little had won his friendship, so that he told her all the circumstances of his life which I have just narrated. Her kindness, shown in various little ways, and her sympathy with his lonely life, called forth the most intense gratitude in a heart which, stained as it was, had been originally created sensitive to every tender feeling.

Hitherto their intercourse had been limited to meetings in the court-yard, or short walks together; never before had Pierre spent an evening with them; and the novelty of a happy family-circle, the warmth and comfort of the little home, made him feel altogether different from his usual self.

When just as he was leaving, Clarette displayed the little metal cross she had bought him, and Madame Blampied fastened it on a piece of black ribbon, and begged him

to take it for their sakes, to remind him as long as he lived, not only of them, but of the dear Saviour and his goodness to sinners, great tears dimmed the black eyes which were usually so keen and bright ; and though, as he took it and hung it round his neck, he could find no words in which to express his feelings, he vowed to himself that it should be a reminder to him from that time forward, of all his dead mother's lessons, and his Redeemer's love.

After he had gone, the children were glad to go to bed, tired out with the day's pleasure and excitement ; but even then Clarette could not be parted from her new plaything, and obtained her mother's leave to take it to bed with her, and there, clasped in its mistress' fat little arms, pussy slept soundly till the morning sun peeped into the room.

Then it struggled out of Clarette's embrace and awakened the little girl by making dashes at a stray curl, which had fallen over her forehead from beneath her cap, provoking a game of play which lasted till it was time to get up.

CHAPTER II.

FROM that time the kitten became the great pleasure of Clarette's life. Like most children, she was passionately fond of animals, but living in a town, had had few opportunites for gratifying her affection for them, and had never possessed a creature of her own before. Trésor, as she called him, now reaped the benefit of this, for all her pent-up love was expended on him, and never was a kitten so tenderly cared for, so enthusiastically loved. He certainly was a fascinating kitten! And every week, as he grew bigger, he developed new beauties, and good qualities, all of which were fully appreciated by his little mistress, who considered him the very king of cats.

He was of the sort which I have sometimes heard called French cats; not that all cats in France are alike, or resemble him, but they are sometimes found there, and are very different from ordinary cats, having some likeness to the Persian breed.

In fact, they are the nobles of their race, and Trésor was one of the finest of his kind. Very large, with very thick fluffy gray and white fur, magnificent feathery tail, and small, round head, which, however, contained a deal of sense—these were Trésor's outward attractions, while his varied accomplishments and intelligent disposition, still more than his beauty, raised him far above "the common herd" of cats.

He was the most attached of pets, the most sagacious puss, an unequalled mouser, and oh! rare virtue, most honest of animals; while, above all other good qualities in Clarette's eyes, he returned her affection with a fidelity rare in his race. He would follow her about like a dog, would sit on the top of the stairs, and watch for her, and as her light step was

heard, would rush to meet her with a peculiar cry of delight, and then purr with satisfaction as he rubbed himself against her ankles and rolled on the floor before her.

He became accomplished, too ; could jump over a stick held high above him, could stand on his hind legs and beg, an accomplishment which he copied from the porter's dog, and with which he astonished and delighted his mistress.

By Easter Trésor had grown almost to his full size—had found a niche in the affections of all the family, and had become a favorite of many of the other inhabitants of the house ; but there were two notable exceptions—the people who lived in the opposite room to the Blampieds.

These were a woman and her son. She was a hard, violent woman, dreaded by every one for her fits of rage and unsparing use of abusive language ; and being besides of an unfriendly churlish humor, she made no friends, and seemed to go through the world at enmity with all around her. To one person

only was she kind and gentle, and that was to her boy, on him she lavished every tenderness and indulgence, petting and spoiling him to such a degree, that he became as much disliked as herself, so rude, and disagreeable he grew. But she saw no fault in him; and did any one ever resent his mischievous tricks, or bad behavior, she attacked them with such violence, that for peace sake, people put up with his conduct rather than draw down a storm by complaints of it.

This boy had a bird—a canary of whom he was very fond, and whose cage was hung in the window opposite the door.

Now, one unlucky day, this door was left open when the widow and her son were out, and during their absence Trésor happening to be in the passage, saw the bird, which to his ideas represented a delicate meal, hopping about in the cage, and went stealthily towards the window, looking out to see how he could get possession of it. The cage was hung pretty high, so it was no easy matter to

get to it; but after sundry ineffectual jumps Trésor managed to reach it with his fore feet, and there hung, while the poor canary, frightened out of its wits, flew wildly from side to side. Trésor's great weight snapped the string by which the cage hung, and down it and the cat fell together upon the floor, and in a few more seconds the poor little bird would have chirped its last, had not its owners at that instant appeared, and then the tables were turned with a vengeance.

Furious with anger, the boy seized Trésor, thumped him without mercy, unheeding his piteous mews, which, however, soon brought Clarette to the rescue; but deaf to her entreaties and apologies, the woman threatened to throw the cat into a pail of hot water which stood near; and, perhaps, might have carried out her cruel threat, had not Trésor, by an unsparing use of his long claws, compelled the boy to release him, and then with wild eyes and puffed out tail rushed into the Blampieds' room as fast as his legs could carry him. From that time these people

hated the "gray beast" as they called him, and though Trésor never again attempted to cross their threshold, they never caught sight of him in the passage or court-yard without attempting to strike or frighten him. This was the only alloy in Clarette's happiness during the months which followed, the happiest ones, she thought, in all her life. Each day passed in a quiet ripple of duties and pleasures, with nothing to disturb them. No care for the future, content with the present, no life could be happier.

True, Madame Blampied had known too much sorrow ever to be glad at heart, but she had put her life into God's hands; she believed in her heart that He does all things well, and took with gratitude the little daily pleasures of her lot, thanked Him for her children, and left their future in His fatherly hands. If, at times, anxious thoughts oppressed her at the knowledge of her own uncertain life, and the helplessness of her little ones, should sickness or death befal her, a quiet half hour in the beautiful old church

near, or a visit to the good Sister of St. Geneviève, to whose convent Marie went every day for schooling, and who were kind friends to all the poor, sorrowful, sick or anxious, who applied to them for help or sympathy, would bring back her usual quiet cheerfulness.

Clarette was a great comfort to her, as you will see, when I tell you how their days were spent.

They got up very early, and after they had had breakfast, Madame Blampied tidied the room, and went away to her daily work at a great needle-work establishment, leaving Clarette to take care of Jean till school-time. Then the good sister, having first kissed her cat, took her little brother by the hand, and led him carefully down the long flights of stairs, and along the street till they came to a house where was what they called, "the crêche," that is, where was a room which the kind Sisters of St. Géneviève hired, and where they took charge of little children whose mothers were obliged to work away from

home. Such places are a great boon for the poor, who, for a trifling payment, can leave their little ones there, knowing they will be fed and cared for till the evening. There, among a number of children, from babies up to little five and six-years-old, Jean remained, while Clarette went on to the Convent-school. In the middle of the day she ran home to warm her soup, feed and play for a few moments with Trésor, and then back again to school. After lessons were over for the day, she called at the crêche for Jean, and they would either play in the court-yard, or go quietly home, till it was time for their mother to leave the shop where she worked. Then they would go to meet her, often turning into one of the many churches which they passed, if they were a little too early, for in Paris the churches are open all the time, either for service, or that people may go in and say a prayer there quietly by themselves.

Clarette had been well taught, and she was naturally a thoughtful child, so that it was a real pleasure to her to find her way into a

church, for as she told her mother, she always felt when she was there as if she were nearer Jesus. Though we know we may be always near Him wherever we are, it certainly is easier to lift one's heart to heaven in God's own house, if we enter it with reverence and love.

After she had said her prayer, she and Jean would sometimes go round to look at the beautiful bright windows, where were figures of saints and angels, and pictures of Bible-stories, and the holy deeds of good men and women long ago.

Some of these stories the Sisters had told Clarette, and she loved to think of them and tell them to Jean as they walked along the streets in the pleasant summer evenings. Particularly she loved the story of St. Génevève the patron saint of Paris, for as she heard of the wondrous works, and the saintly life of one who was only a poor peasant girl, she felt encouraged to hope that she too might one day do something great and noble for God and her fellow-creatures. On Sundays

she often thought of such things, as, after having been to mass, and eating their simple dinner, she and her mother and Jean spent the afternoon in the Champs Elysée, or some such pleasant place. Pierre often accompanied them, and for him Clarette had a strong affection, founded in the gratitude she felt for his gift of Trésor ; so when the four were all together, walking in the shady walks, listening to the gay strains of the band, or sitting quietly chatting, Clarette's measure of happiness was so full that she often longed to do something to show the Giver of it how grateful she was.

And those Sundays were happy days for Pierre also. New-Year's day had begun a new era for him. From that time he felt that he had friends interested in his welfare, and this was an encouragement to struggle against the evil influences around him. Often in the months that followed did the little cross which lay hidden under his blue blouse, suggest thoughts which helped him to resist the wrong doings to which his companions, or the

grim tempter Hunger persuaded him. He went oftener to church, thought more of the holy lessons which his mother had taught him, both by precept and example, and gradually began to desire some better, steadier way of earning his living, than his present hand-to-mouth existence.

He sometimes talked of these things to Clarette, for like many shy people he found it easier to be unreserved with a child than with a grown person, and he talked to her of his wishes and feelings in a way which would have been impossible to any one else.

Clarette felt much honored by this confidence, and perhaps by her childish faith in his sincerity and power of carrying out his good resolutions, and her simple trust in the God who cares for all, was of as much use to him as a more experienced confidante would have been. Sometimes, too, when after they had returned from their walk, or evening service, while the mother was getting supper ready, they sat by the window-seat on which Trésor always lay, petting him, or looking out at the western

sky, Clarette would talk to him of her favorite theme, the good and marvellous deeds of noble men and women, and of her anxiety to do some "golden deed" that should be really great and glorious.

Sometimes the boy felt inclined to smile at the childish enthusiasm, as she narrated to him some old legend or stirring tale of self-sacrifice and devotion, but gradually his spirit caught somewhat of the glow of her admiration for all that was "pure, lovely, and of good report," and he too found it in his heart to wish that, like the crusaders of old, he could fight for the truth, and if needs be die for it.

And how fared Clarette's New-Year resolve all this time? Like the good resolutions of most of us, I fear, her aspirations did not always take effect on her deeds; the great future for which she hoped, dazzled her mental vision, so that the little present opportunities were unseen or neglected.

Still it was not all failure: the good resolution bore some fruit, and perhaps her very failures and inconsistencies worked for good

to her, as they showed her how weak our nature is, how impossible it is for us by ourselves to do any good thing, and taught her how much easier it is to plan *great things* than to perform little ones, how much harder to give up one's own way in every-day matters than to build magnificent castles in the air of fnture sacrifices.

To be patient when Jean was unreasonable, to leave off playing with Trésor when she knew she should be at work, to watch when her mother was tired, and so not worry her by inconvenient questions or proposals, and in such small matters, Clarette found quite enough exercise for her resolution, and, as I have said, sometimes conquered, and often was overcome by her temptations. Sometimes she felt very despairing when she thought of her frequent failures ; but her mother, who, without saying anything to her child about it, had closely watched her efforts, successes, and defeats, thanked God with heartfelt gratitude, as she saw that her child was slowly learning that lesson which all who would follow Jesus must learn.

CHAPTER III.

THE days and weeks passed smoothly and happily away, and summer in all its glory had arrived, when suddenly the thunder-cloud that had been slowly gathering unnoticed by all but the most observant, burst over Europe, and bright days passed away from Paris—for how long, who can say ?

War was declared ; that war which during the last months of 1870 made the whole world aghast with horror and grief, turned the fair land of France into desolation, and made of the queen of cities, a spectacle of misery, humiliation, and suffering. Seldom was a war entered on with such mad rashness and criminal folly ; never has a nation been so

punished by the event of a war and its consequences. Where these will end it is too soon now to say. The heart sickens at the thought of the thousands and thousands of innocent victims to ambition and lawlessness, who are even now suffering all that human nature can suffer both in mind and body. Few even of those who most truly regretted the declaration of war, could foresee the misery into which Paris was to be plunged ; but before many days had passed the land was full of sorrow and wailing for those who, happier than many who were then spared, fell in hundreds and thousands on the first battle-fields, leaving mothers, widows, and children desolate and unprotected. How many homes were destroyed, how many hearts broken, how great the sum of suffering in Paris alone, what mind can conceive, or pen describe !

As the fancy dwells on the ghastly heaps that lay on those fields of blood, one's very thoughts shrink back in horror from the vista of misery which opens before one. The air, one may truly say, seems full of the sighs, not

only of the dying, but of those left sorrowing and alone; and as day by day the weight of misery was increased, there were few in either France or Germany who were not either plunged in grief, or trembling with sickening anxiety.

Darker and darker became the days in Paris; many of the gay and rich fled from the city, once the scene of splendid spectacles, mirthful sport, and frivolous gayety, now become a place of trembling hopes, and despairing anxiety, that must at length give place to utter despair, mad recklessness, and the very lowest depths of woe.

The siege began, and at first hope and determination sustained the courage of all; the Parisians went about their avocations as usual, and tried to cheat each other and themselves into a certainty that all would yet be well. With the boastful vanity that characterizes them, and with the nobler feelings of patriotism, and belief in the power of their own arms, they refused to suppose their strong and beautiful city could be brought to crouch

helpless and humiliated at the feet of the conqueror. Buoyed up by self-confidence, ignorant of the horrors contained in the word siege, at first there were few drooping hearts, few desponding faces; but as day after day went by, and the strong foe outside the walls drew his lines closer and firmer round the city, as it became evident no supplies could be brought into the city, and that provisions were rapidly becoming scarcer, all began to see but too plainly the grim spectres of Famine and Disease,—the enemies inside the town, which were more terrible than the human enemies without.

Disease now leaped into their midst, selecting the weak and the children for his first victims, and the town was filled with sorrowing mothers, weeping over their little ones—the grief at losing those precious lives aggravated by their inability to give them that nourishment which would have saved them. Famine, too, now showed its ghastly form in all its horrors; dearer and dearer became food, till only the rich could buy any-

thing that was good and nourishing; the government rations became smaller, faces grew thin and pinched, and as the cold weather came on, the suffering increased. It would be impossible for me to attempt to give an idea of the woe and want which filled the city. I can but attempt to relate how it affected the little family of the Blampieds.

In one respect they were more fortunate than most of their neighbors. They had no male relatives, and so were spared the keen anxiety, or the terrible blow of certainty, which was the portion of all who then had sons, husbands, or brothers,—for all who could bear arms must take their part in the defence of their country.

Among other shops which were obliged to be closed at this time, was the establishment at which Madame Blampied worked. She was therefore left destitute, on the evening when the last wages were paid. The poor woman, distracted by anxious thoughts and fears for her children, almost mechanically turned into the church nearest her home, and

falling on her knees, in an agony of prayer too intense for words, remained for a long time in a sort of stupor of grief. Gradually, as her heart lifted itself up in prayer, she became calmer; she raised her eyes to the altar before which she knelt, and saw the last beams of sunlight falling on the face of the Holy Child pictured on the wall above it. The sweet radiance of the beautiful face seemed to calm and still her restless fears, and the outstretched arms of Jesus brought to mind the soothing words, "Come unto me," "Cast all your care upon me," with which she had so often before lulled anxieties and faithless fears. No danger, no need, was too great for His help; and trusting in Him, she might be sure all would be well.

As she rose from her knees, she breathed a silent thanksgiving that her husband had gone to his rest, so she was spared the terrible anxiety which so many were now suffering.

Among the first who had volunteered was Pierre, who now felt as if a way had been open to him to escape from a life daily be-

coming more distasteful to him ; and his young imagination conjured up visions of glory and honor that he might win, brave and heroic actions he might perform.

He had been in uniform now some little time, and felt every inch a soldier, and so Madame Blampied thought he looked, as she met him on her way home. It was sad, though, to see such a youthful face under the soldiers kepi, but alas ! people had got used to that sight, for too large a proportion of the whole army was composed of half-grown lads.

As Pierre walked home with her, Madame Blampied told him her anxieties, which he lightened as much as he could, by saying :

"Never fear, mother !" (for so Pierre now always called her). "The good God will not let the children starve, and as long as I have a crust they shall share it. The Government still feeds us well, indeed," he continued, laughing. "I feel like a prince, with my dinner coming to me every day without any care of mine ; so never fret, mother, Clarie and the little Jean shall not starve, though, poor

children, they may have to learn what hunger is."

And Pierre was as good as his word. The autumn months went by, and with great economy, Madame Blampied managed to keep the grim wolf from the door. Day by day, however, her heart grew heavier, as she saw children of friends and neighbors borne off to their last resting-places, sickness making short work of their little frames, enfeebled by bad and insufficient food.

These autumn days were sad ones for all; even children caught the reflection of the sorrow and despondency in their mothers' faces: and although French people can be gay and light-hearted when we graver people would be oppressed with sorrow, there was little real gladness in any heart in Paris during that dismal time. But sometimes the children could forget fear and hunger in a game of play, and Clarette and Jean had many a moment of forgetfulness and amusement. And Trésor, what of him? He fared the best in those days of want, for he could and did go

hunting for himself, and dined sumptuously when his mistress wanted.

But rats and mice were becoming food for more than cats now, and might be seen prepared in various ways in the windows of the restaurants. But Trésor could still find food enough, and was a fat, noble-looking creature still, and by his pretty tricks, and affection for his mistress, did much to cheer her during those long dreary days of want and anxiety.

CHAPTER IV.

IT was the beginning of another year, a year that was to bring to Paris still bitterer sorrows than those even of the last few months.

All was changed since twelve months ago when the city had been radiant with gayety, prosperous and luxurious; feastings, merry-makings, even household joys were all now things of the past: the present contained nothing but grief, want, and anxiety, while beyond in the future, growing each day more clear, were shadows of still greater woes.

As great a change might be seen between the rosy, plump, merry little Clarette of a few months ago, and the pale thin child who, shaking with long-drawn sobs, and floods of

tears, was sitting one day early in January on the staircase, with her cat clasped close to her poor little heart, that was beating so wildly in its distress. All the old merry days were over; the lovely Marquise, the kind old Count were gone—where, Clarette did not know, and all who were left in the Hôtel Bongour looked sad and heavy-hearted, for all were oppressed by anxiety for the fate of husband, brother, or father, or else were mourning their loss.

But it was not now in sympathy with them that Clarette wept, nor because her own friend Pierre was far from her, in one of the most distant forts, nor even because her mother looked harassed and wan, and bread was scarce, and she herself cold and hungry—no, for none of these reasons, sufficient though they were, were her tears falling so fast.

Closer and closer she hugged the cat, who, as if wishing to comfort his mistress, rubbed his head against her wet cheeks, and made soft purring sounds as he patted her neck with his velvet gloves; but these marks of

sympathy seemed but to increase her sorrow, and she continued to cry, till hearing footsteps ascending the stairs, Clarette jumped up and ran into their room, hastily wiping her eyes, and trying to look as usual.

She had just placed Trésor in his favorite window-sill, when her mother entered. At another time Madame Blampied would certainly have noticed the tear-stained face of her little daughter, but just now she was too sick at heart to observe anything.

Dropping wearily into a chair, and catching up her little Jean, she pressed him to her heart, as with tears and sobs she related how in coming back from the Bois de Boulonge, where she had gone to seek for a few sticks, she had met a mournful little group of children who were carrying between them a boy, no bigger than little Jean, who lay motionless in their arms, with one dark stain of blood upon his white forehead. He was dead, killed instantaneously by a fragment of a shell as he was playing with his companions.

"Oh, the horrors of war!" and the poor

woman shuddered at the recollection of that baby face lying cold and stiff, with the blood stain on the smooth white forehead, as she pressed her lips to her own darling's warm brow, murmuring, as she did so :

"And it might have been thee, my treasure! Some mother now is weeping over that little child."

Clarette listened with eager interest as her mother related all she had seen during her walk ; the misery and sickening sights which met her at every turn, the crowds of half-famished people searching in gutters and refuse heaps for something with which to still their gnawing hunger, the many houses where death was, the cartloads of wounded men she had seen, as they were being carried to the hospitals.

"Merciful Father!" she exclaimed, as she finished her recital, "where will it end? Must I see my children starve before my eyes, or killed like that poor innocent?" And worn out with grief, want of food, and anxiety, the poor woman burst into an agony of tears.

Clarette stood silently watching her for a few moments; then stealing softly to her side, she laid her cold little hand on her mother's, and said gently:

"Do not cry, mother, dear mother! Jean and I will never again ask for more, as we did this morning."

"More! my darling!" cried the mother, "if only I could give you that; but every day food gets scarcer. All rations will soon have to be stopped—no work can be got, begging is of no use. The kind Sisters told me to-day, they would help me as long as they could, but they are half starved themselves. Why! the very nobles are thankful for food Trésor would once have despised. But, bah!" and Madame Blampied rose and tried to smile. "I am in faint-heart, my children. The good God will take care of us. Let us go to Him and beg for patience and help. Though ten thousand prayers are going up to Him, He will hear ours too, and answer them as He knows is best. We will go to Vespers this evening and pray with all our hearts; but

first I must go to see Mère Nicôt. How is Albert now, Clarette, do you know?"

Clarette shook her head. "I hear him moaning," she answered, "and I saw Sister Adèle after she had been to see him."

"What did she say?" asked Madame Blampied, anxiously, "what fever is it?"

"She said it was from having had too little food," said Clarette, "and then getting wet; and oh! mother," and the tears rushed into the child's eyes, "Sister Adèle says he must surely die if he has no nourishment, and how can he get it? All that his mother has is a piece of dry crust, and that he will not eat."

Madame Blampied sighed heavily. Her mother-heart ached for the desolate woman whose only child was dying of want before her eyes: but what could she do? All she could offer was her sympathy; and thinking that even that might be some support to the unhappy mother, she crossed the passage that divided their rooms, and pushed open the door, which, as usual since Trésor's adventure with the canary, was tight shut.

But now Madame Nicôt was too sad at heart to have noticed even Trésor, had he ventured over the threshold. Her tongue had lost its bitterness, and found only soft gentle words with which to lull her child, who lay tossing restlessly from side to side, calling wildly for the food the want of which had thus brought him to death's door.

Nor could Trésor now have done any harm, for the treasured canary no longer sang and fluttered in its pretty cage. It, like its master, had day by day grown weaker for want of food. A few scanty bread crumbs, ill spared from the meagre meals, had been the bird's sole nourishment till a few days before this. When the boy went to the cage, as usual, to look at his favorite, the cherished pet was found lying at the bottom of the cage, its little throat panting and its eyes opening and shutting with rapidity.

Albert took it tenderly up, as the poor little thing gave one feeble chirp, and stretching out its feet, died in its master's hand. Hot tears had dropped on its yellow feathers from Jeanne

Nicôt's hard eyes, as she looked from it at her darling, who, wan and weak, had thrown himself on the floor in an agony of distress. More than birds might die of hunger in these cruel times! But to proceed with our story.

Next day Albert was taken ill; and the good Sister who came to see him shook her head sadly in answer to the mother's eager questions and piteous entreaties. She could do nothing—food alone could save him, and that, alas! she had not to give.

Sadly she went away, her kind heart heavily burdened with the sorrow of others, for of all sad things the most terrible is to see misery and suffering, which is capable of being relieved, and yet not be able to do it.

Clarette had heard the Sister say to a neighbor, who inquired after the boy:

"Only nourishment can save him, and it seems mockery to tell the poor mother that."

Mockery, indeed; when even rich people found it hard to get food; when the restaurants once renowned for delicate fare, were now reduced to serving up cats, dogs, and rats to

their customers; when the butchers' shops were almost empty, and all who possessed a small store of any sort of food could scarcely be induced to part with it at the most exorbitant prices.

To a child, the thought that anything is inevitable is almost impossible to realize. In general the pains and pleasures of children are so dependent on the *will* of others, that it seems incredible that anything should befal them that cannot be helped, if only some one would. As people grow older they become more accustomed to the idea that there are ills which no exertion on our part can avert, and yet even the most resigned will take all pains, make every effort when there is anything to be done which can prevent the dreaded evil; and it is a shock to all to see a fellow-being suffering and dying from causes which could be cured.

To Clarette the notion seemed intolerable. She could scarcely believe it. A little food would save a life, would bring back joy to the poor mother's heart, and yet in all Paris that

little food could not be had. She could not get the thought of it from her mind, and that afternoon, drawn by a curious sympathy towards the door of the sick-room, she sat on the staircase listening to the ravings of the fevered child, and to the sobs of the distracted mother, and feeling such a heartache for those who perhaps had been more nearly like enemies to her then any one else, in her short life, as she had never felt before. No, not even when Pierre said good-by, or the news came of the death of Jacques, the old porter's kind young son, on the field of Sédan.

How she longed to be able to do something for the sufferer. "Yes, even though he beat you once, my darling," she whispered to Trésor, who was curled up in her lap as usual, "I would give anything I have to save his life."

At that moment the recollection of an advertisement stuck in the window of the restaurant at the corner of the street came to her memory.

"*Seven francs will be given for every cat.*"

A shudder came over her as she remembered

it. She tried to forget it, but as she heard the sobs of Madame Nicôt and the cries of the delirious boy, her own words, "I would give anything I have to save his life," seemed to ring in her ears, and her often spoken wish of making some sacrifice, doing some good to others, came, as if to accuse her, to her mind.

"Ah! but not this! Anything but this!" and so do we all cry when the hour comes.

Anything but what is demanded of us, anything except the thing we can do, any sacrifice but that which is a real sacrifice, any self-denial but that which makes us shrink, any offering but that which costs us dearly. Thus do our hearts cry out, when the moment of trial approaches, and our human nature shrinks back from the self-inflicted, or Heaven-sent suffering. No one but those who have known in some degree what it is to cherish a real wish and hope of doing some noble act, to have kept the determination of doing some great deed before their eyes as a vision of the future, to have longed for an opportunity of thus showing their love and

devotion, can at all understand the feelings of this enthusiastic, keenly-feeling child, whose sensitive nature at the same time was fired with admiration at all traits of noble self-devotion in others, and a wish to imitate them; while it rendered her the more alive to the suffering which must ever accompany sacrifices of affection. The moment of accomplishing her resolve had arrived, and for the first time she understood that the heights of self-sacrifice must be climbed by bleeding feet.

It may seem strained to apply such grand terms as self-sacrifice and devotion to this little French girl's opportunity of aiding a sufferer at the expense of her affection for a cat, but all things are relative. A hill which looks low to those who have climbed mountains, requires great exertion to mount from those who are unused to such action, and in their eyes will tower above them like Mont Blanc.

Truly no fierce struggle between patriotism and self-interest, honor and love, can cost a more real pang than that which now pierced

the child's heart, as she sat with her cat clasped to her breast, striving to make up her mind between the feelings which alternately swayed her.

On one side pleaded her pity for the sick boy, the lessons taught her by the Sisters, her own cherished dream, the example of the blessed saints, all these urged her on; while keeping her back were her fervent love for her only pet, her affection for Pierre, whose gift it had been, and horror at the thought of the fate in store for her darling.

"No! she could not, she ought not! It would be cruel, wicked, to sell her beloved Trésor, Pierre's present, for such a purpose. And then, of what use would seven francs be? It could buy but little, and she would just have lost her pet, have killed her darling for nothing!

So over and over again she argued with herself, and yet in spite of all she could say, the sound of her former speeches seemed to echo in her ears, as if to mock her.

She had wondered at those who had money

not sharing their good things with the poor. She had declared nothing should keep her from doing a "golden deed" if it were ever in her power; she had dwelt in half-envious admiration on stories of heroic children, of unselfish acts, of painful sacrifice.

Tears and sobs took the place at last of these contending voices. Passionately hugging the unconscious Trésor, she kissed his soft gray fur, as she murmured:

"No, no, my Trésor, I could not do it—I could not hurt thee! It would be too hard, too cruel!"

And then, as we have said, she sat and cried till her mother's footsteps were heard, and then fearful of being questioned, she had hurried into their room.

To return now to where we had left her, Madame Blampied paid a visit to her neighbor, and came back looking still sadder.

"We can only pray, my child!" was all she said, and taking Jean in her arms, she bade Clarette come with her to the church.

Clarette obeyed, first looking to see that

Trésor was safe in the room before she closed the door, and then she followed her mother down the stairs into the street, now so quiet and deserted. As she passed the butcher's shop, she averted her head, as if to refuse to see the advertisement which haunted her, but almost against her will she felt compelled to look to see if it were still there. Yes! there it was, in great black letters, that seemed to stare at her, and say, "Seven francs! food for the hungry, comfort for the sorrowing mother!"

But now they have passed, and are at the church. In those days of misery the churches were fuller than in happier times. Men may think they can get on without God when all is bright and joyous for them, but when dark days come, they feel the need of a stronger arm, a Higher Power, on which to rest and hope; and those who have long been deaf to the loving appeal which goes on continually in our ears, are aroused to a consciousness that there is a Father in Heaven, a God who ruleth the heart when trials and troubles come.

Bearded men, whose faces were stern and white with grief and anxiety, mothers whose very souls were racked with sorrow, wives whose husbands were braving death, whose children were starving, whose every affection seemed but a cause of fresh suffering, knelt absorbed in prayer, and with them were little children, who also had learned to come to God to seek for help and courage.

All hearts were bowed in an agony of supplication during the short service, and then by twos and threes the congregation dispersed, comforted in some degree, surely, by their communion with God.

Some however still knelt, and among these were Clarette and her mother, the latter praying as only mothers can pray for their children, that they and she also might have strength to bear all that His will should send them. Clarette, too, was pouring out her heart, her doubts, her fears, her indecision, to that loving Saviour whom she had been taught was ever ready to hear even a child's prayer. If only she could make up her mind!

As she was once more debating the question within herself, a loud voice broke the stillness of the church. She started, for the words seemed an answer to her questioning. "I will not offer unto the Lord my God of that which costs me nothing."

It was the voice of a priest, a famous preacher, who was about to deliver a sermon, and this was the text he had chosen. Never had Clarette listened to legend or story, as she listened to that sermon, every word of which seemed meant for her alone, as the preacher dwelt on the necessity of suffering which exists in every offering. He dwelt on the various ways in which men might make offerings to God, from the highest of all—the surrender of ourselves, body, soul and spirit, to His will and service, to the smallest service we render to any of our fellow-creatures for His Name's sake. Far more he said than I can repeat here. The closing passage of his sermon is all I shall give; that will be enough to show you how Clarette's decision was come to.

"I know, beloved," he said, "that at this time, when few have enough to supply their barest needs, it may appear a mockery to dwell on the duty of helping others. And yet, my brethren, it is at this very time that there are most opportunities of so doing, and of earning for yourselves the reward of your Saviour's gratitude; for no less than that has he promised to those who give even a cup of cold water for His Name's sake.

"Let us not forget this. Share your poverty with one another to the best of your ability, and I know, yes, I *know*, it shall be recompensed unto you; for the Lord Himself hath said it; and though men say how can this be, I trust in Him who is Truth itself, and feel certain that none who deny themselves for Him shall miss their guerdon; not that it may be paid them in the good things of this world, the meat and the drink which perish in the using, but the peace of a heart full of love and faith toward God shall be theirs; and in the world to come—eternal life. Then, my brethren, let us take the sufferings of this fear-

ful time, as the holy saints of old took theirs as coming from God, and they will carry us on toward heaven. Borne with murmurs, or with despair, they will but impede us on our way. Manfully endure, earnestly pray, and watch lest the evil passions which the horrors and privations of war so often fan into devouring flames, consume all brotherly affections. The wounded and the sick especially call for our help and sympathy. Let us all respond to that call to the utmost of our power.

"'Ye do it unto me'—unto Me, the Lord who bought you, the Saviour who redeemed you, the King who shall judge you, the Friend who will never forsake you."

He stopped, and Clarette gave the long sigh of excited interest and exhaustion, which every true *listener* knows, and throwing herself on her knees as he pronounced the benediction, she from the depths of her heart, full of a child's love and faith, prayed to her dear Lord to accept her offering, and to make her willing to give it; and then, rising from her knees, with her eyes bright with a nobler light

than had ever before shone in them, she obeyed her mother's summons to return.

Clarette was no ordinary child; her nature was neither shallow nor weak; she had decided what was right, and having made her decision, would keep to it; so that, though the natural feelings of her heart would make themselves heard, and pleaded for her dearly loved pet, she never for an instant wavered in her resolution.

With a face pale and set, she walked up the many flights of stairs into their room. There was Trésor fast asleep; till, hearing her step, he jumped up and came to meet her, rubbing himself lovingly against her and purring loudly.

A great lump came into her throat, a mist of tears blotted him out of her sight, as she took her darling in her arms for the last time and carried him off to his cruel fate. A feeling as if she were a traitor to her darling, as if he would find it out and hate her; all the keen unreasonable feelings of a child tormented her even more than her own grief; but with a

hero's resolution she turned to go down the stairs.

As she passed Madame Nicôt's door, she heard the mother say :

"We can only pray, my friend ; but prayer is mighty, and Sister Adèle promised to bring food to-morrow, if she possibly can."

"To-morrow !" said the mother, in a tone sharp with agony. "He cannot live till to-morrow ! Oh ! my boy, my boy !" and the sobs choked her voice.

As if to give herself no time to repent, Clarette rushed down the stairs, flew rather than walked through the street, and gained the butcher's shop in a few seconds. The owner was just closing his empty shop, as the child, flushed and breathless, arrived.

"Sir," she stammered, "your advertisement —this is my"— She could not finish, but biting her lip to keep back the tears, she hid her face against the cat, and was silent.

The butcher was somewhat bewildered.

"Is it that you want to sell your cat, my child," he asked, "or what is it ?"

"Yes, it is that—I must. I want the money," stammered Clarette at length; "take him, sir, and oh! please," and here her sobs and tears refused to be controlled, "please, do not hurt him *much*."

The butcher was touched, but business is business. He took out the seven francs, and lifting Trésor from her arms, dropped the silver pieces into her hand. Trésor gave a plaintive mew as he felt himself in a strange grasp. The sound seemed to pierce Clarette's heart. She gave a little cry, put out her hand, as if to take him back again, and then turned suddenly and sped away as fast as she could.

She did not stop till she reached the restaurant just opposite the gateway of the Hôtel Bourgon, and there she entered.

She was well known to the proprietor, for in the bright and joyous days before the war he had often supplied suppers to the wealthy dwellers in the Hôtel Bourgon, and used frequently to stop to speak to the bright-faced child when he met her in the court-yard,

CLARETTE SELLING HER CAT—PAGE 114.

often giving her some little dainty for herself or her cat.

He had not seen her for some time, but recognized her at once, and said, with a kindly nod :

"Well, little one, what do you want ?"

Clarette tried to steady her voice sufficiently to answer, but something seemed to choke her, and while she was trying to speak, the man observed her more closely, and seeing how pale and thin she was, supposed she must have come to him to beg, thinking that in remembrance of the old days he would give her something.

Monsieur Baptiste was not a bad-hearted man, and he had always liked the little girl, and in times of plenty would willingly have given to her, or any one else in need ; but poverty makes worldly people more and more selfish, and these were not days in which people could give away a bit of black bread without seriously feeling the sacrifice, for every crumb in the city was daily getting more precious.

But as he was deciding that, painful as it was, he must refuse her, his eye caught the glitter of the silver pieces which Clarette held tightly in her hand, and that changed the complexion of things ; and he said, gayly :

" You are hungry, my child. You want to buy. Well, what is it to be ? 'Bow-wow cutlets, or pussy-patties ?' But you are probably tired of Pussy. Doubtless my old friend Trésor gave you some meals ?"

At this, Clarette could no longer control herself, and burst into such an agony of tears, that Baptiste was quite frightened ; and a purchaser entering his shop at this moment, he called his wife to look after the child, and bustled away to attend upon the new comer.

His wife was a kind motherly woman, and with a few questions and caresses soon drew the outlines of her story from Clarette. " She had come to buy some brown stuff—she did not quite know its name, but she had heard of it—that soup was made of it, and it was for a sick boy—she was crying, because Trésor,—her cat Trésor—was gone."

"Gone! where?"

"Sold. I sold him, but I could not help it. This is the money, and oh! please Madame, can you sell me a little of the soup-stuff? Albert is so ill, so very ill; and the Sisters say it is only this which can do him good."

The woman's eyes were full of tears as Clarette ended. She guessed how it was, and her mother-heart was deeply moved by the child's loving sacrifice, and evident grief. But it was no easy thing to comply with her request, as M. Baptiste, though quite able to appreciate the child's conduct, and be touched by it, at the same time seldom let his emotions interfere with business. They had only one little jar of this extract of meat—which was what Clarette meant—remaining, and this he was keeping as a last resource for themselves, should the siege be prolonged. But the good woman resolved to make an effort to induce him to part with a spoonful or two for the sake of the child. She drew him on one side, told Clarette's story so pathetically, and pleaded so earnestly, that her husband at

length consented; and being, as I have said, naturally a kind-hearted man, suggested to his wife that she had better make the soup there, as it was unlikely that there was any fire in the Blampieds' room.

Madame Baptiste joyfully agreed, and presently came into the shop with a jug full of steaming beef-tea, which she put into Clarette's hands, saying:

"I will walk across the street with you, for these are days when for a drink of soup men will do much, and you might be robbed of your prize."

But the street was almost empty. The stars were shining brightly as they went into the street; so, as they got near the gateway, Madame Baptiste wished the child good-night and returned.

Madame Blampied was just coming out of the gate as her little girl entered. Full of anxiety at the absence of the child, she had, at length, determined to go out to search for her; but on seeing her safe and sound, she exclaimed, with some vexation in her tone:

"Clarette! where have you been? It is seven o'clock—far too late for you to be roaming about the streets. Has anything happened to you?"

"No, mother, nothing," answered Clarette, her voice still trembling, after her long fit of crying. "Nothing has happened, except,—except that I have got some soup for Albert."

"Some soup!" exclaimed Madame Blampied, little less surprised than if she had heard of a miracle. "Ciel! how could you have got it, my child?"

"I—I bought it, mother. M. Baptiste was very kind, and let me have it when he heard it was for a sick boy; but this is all he can spare. Do you think it is enough to do him any good?"

Silent from astonishment, Madame Blampied lifted up the cover of the tin, and saw more than a pint of good dark soup, the smell of which almost made the poor half-famished woman sick with longing. Hastily replacing the cover, she took the tin from Clarette, saying: "God be praised for this!

it may save the poor boy's life! He shall have it at once, and then, my darling, you must tell me what good angel helped you."

And the good woman, unselfishly rejoicing over her neighbor's good fortune, went quickly up the stairs, followed more slowly by Clarette, who dreaded entering their room, which would seem so desolate without her Trésor, whose little cry of delight had always greeted her entrance. She found Jean seated on the window sill, and crying bitterly. He came running to meet her, sobbing out:

"Oh! Clarie, Clarie, Trésor is gone! We cannot find him, and mother says some one must have stolen him to sell—for they eat cats now—oh! do you think any one could be so cruel as to kill Trésor?"

Clarette could not answer. She could only cry too, while Jean continued to sob out lamentations, varied by conjectures as to what Pierre would say when he came back. Clarette had already thought of this, and the idea that he might think her cruel, or ungrateful, was a very terrible one to her.

As she was drying her eyes, and trying to quiet Jean, her mother entered.

"Madame Nicôt wants to thank you," she began, but guessing that Clarette had just heard of the loss of her pet, she came to her little girl, and kissing her tenderly, said:

"I am sorry for you, my child, and I could weep for Trésor myself. He was the best and dearest of pets, but, perhaps, he may yet find his way back to us."

Clarette shook her head, as she said, sadly:

"No, no, mamma, he will never, never come back, and it is my doing."

"Your doing, my child! Surely not. I remember how careful you were to shut the door before we went to church."

"It is my doing, mother," said Clarette, in a low voice. "I will tell you about it when Jean is asleep. I would rather he did not know."

And so, after her little brother was in bed and asleep, Clarette told her mother in a few words what she had done, and Madame Blampied, thanking God in her heart for having

given her a child with such a spirit, comforted her little daughter, and told her how happy she should be to think that such an opportunity had been given her of carrying out her dreams and wishes.

"We should love animals, my darling, because God made them, but we should love our fellow-men more, for they are more precious in His sight, and if we allow our affection for our pets to stand in the way of our being kind to one another, it is only being selfish, not kind-hearted. Thank the good God in your prayers to-night, my child, for having helped you to do right."

Clarette felt cheered and comforted by her mother's words, and went to sleep much less unhappy than it would have seemed a few hours ago possible to be. Her mother had convinced her that Trésor would not be tortured, would probably not even have time to suffer, while on the other hand, Albert, without the soup, would have got too low and weak for any hope of his recovery, and

his poor mother would have been left desolate and alone.

Now for a short time we must leave Clarette and her mother, and take a glimpse at what Pierre is doing.

CHAPTER V.

IN a long room in which stand rows of narrow beds, lies a youth whose pale drawn features have little in them to remind one of the healthy merry Pierre of a year ago.

Pale and still he lies, his dark eyes fixed on the window opposite him, through which he can catch a glimpse of the blue sky, underneath which he is never again to stand, and as he looks a faint smile trembles on his white lips, for he is thinking of what lies beyond that sky, and of the wonders and glories which shall one day be his in that land so far-off, and which is yet to him so near.

Presently a figure passes between him and the window, and a gentle face, which he has

learned dearly to love bends over him and speaks to him kind, soothing words. The dark eyes glisten as the feeble hand—for Pierre has only one hand now—feels weakly about to touch that of the kind Sister of Mercy for whose coming he had been hoping.

"Thank God you are come, in time, Sister," he murmured, in a low, faint voice, and then trying to point to his neck, he whispered :

"Will you take it off?"

The Sister obeyed the sign, and unfastened a piece of black ribbon, and took from his neck a little cross, which she put into his hand.

"Little Clarette!" he murmured, "thy gift has been a blessed one to me." Then signing to the Sister, he continued in a voice that grew more and more faint : "Promise me, Sister, that you will find her when you can, Hotel Bourgon, Rue ——. I have told you where before," and his eyes looked anxiously at the Sister.

"Yes, my son, I know," she answered,

gently, "and I will take it to her, and tell her all."

He smiled his thanks, and whispered:

"Tell her how it helped me to remember the mother's lessons. That though I have had no chance of doing a noble deed, I have tried to do my duty. God is merciful, and He will forgive."

His voice failed him, his hand grew cold. For one moment a heavenly smile shone in his black eyes, and over the pale features, and then the still form was forsaken by its spirit, which passed into the presence of its Maker.

A tear glistened in the Sister's eyes as she closed the eyes and crossed the arms about the breast; and then after hanging the little cross round her neck for safe keeping, she passed on to the next bed.

"Is he gone?" asks the soldier who is lying in it.

"Yes," answered the Sister, "he has gone to rest."

"Ah!" and the soldier, a rough, middle-

aged man, sighed. "Well! we must all die, but it is not all who are ready. We laughed at him in the fort, and called him the monk, but, maybe, when a man comes to die, it is better to have been mocked, than to have mocked."

"He died like a Christian." said the Sister, gently, "as we shall all die, I trust, when we are called."

"*He* lived like one," said the man brusquely. Then added, in a softer tone, "Well! he was a good comrade, and did many a good turn for those who jeered at him. There! where is the use of regretting by-gones—the lad is gone, and I can never tell him that if things were to come over again Jean Mourut would take a different part; but at least this I can and will do, give up the bad ways he used to look so grave at. I may never be a saint, but please God, neither will I be a devil any longer."

"That is well, my son, and perhaps Pierre may be permitted to know if he has won one soul back to Christ."

"He had done no noble deed, only his duty." Those were the humble words of the young soldier, as he lay dying, but the Sister who had heard them knew well what a hard duty that had been, and how nobly he had done it.

In those long days of suffering which Pierre had borne so bravely and patiently, the nurse and the sick boy had been much together, and the quiet holy face of the Sister had seemed to the boy a reflection of his long-dead mother; so that he had gradually given her all his confidence, had told her of his ignorant childhood, the kindness of his only friends the Blampieds, who had done so much for him, and had even described Clarette, and related the dreams of noble deeds, the stories of the Saints of old which had, he said, so often helped him and strengthened him, when he was well-nigh weary of striving to keep out of evil.

It was the Sister who had told him that life was slipping from him, who had cheered his soul with words of holy faith and love, and

who had brought a priest to give to him the food which would strengthen his soul in the last agony, and prepare it for the meeting with its God.

Now he had fallen asleep, his short battle was over—the shore was gained—and there were few who would remember that Pierre had ever lived.

But not in vain had that short life been given. More than one of his rough companions would be the better all their lives for the lessons they had seen him practise in the midst of evil examples, corrupting influences, mocking gibes, and insulting sneers.

And when, at length, one February day, when the siege was over, and the once proud city lay humbled and helpless before its conquerors, Clarette received from the Sister's hands the little cross, and heard how nobly her friend had fought his fight, how like the heroes of her loved stories, he had resisted evil, and endured scorn, there were some hearts that grieved sorely at the thought that they should see his face no more.

But the memory of his steadfastness, the recollection of how he had *done*, not dreamt noble deeds, while, himself unconscious that there was aught that was noble about them, could never cease to act like a living example upon his little friend; who, as she hung the little cross round her own neck, prayed that she might never forget him, or the lessons the dreadful siege had taught her. She would never again long for some great thing to do; she had found how hard it was to do little ones, and how, unless God had helped her, she would have been too selfish, despite all her dreams, to make a sacrifice even to save the life of a fellow-creature; while Pierre, whom she had thought far less enthusiastic than herself, had for weeks and months gone steadily on in his difficult path, being kind to his tormentors, faithful to his God.

A few more words and we have done.

Those last days of the siege were very terrible ones, but the God in whom Madame Blampied so fervently trusted, brought her and her little ones safely through them;

though all three were worn into mere shadows of their former selves, and Madame Blampied's nerves were so shattered by all she had seen and suffered, that she could not rest till she had left Paris, and gone back to the little farm in Normandy where her brother lived.

There, too, war had left its dismal mark, but poor and wretched as it was, she felt she was happier there, and would willingly work twice as hard as she had ever done, to remain there, away from the great city which had grown so hateful to her.

Well was it for her and her little ones that she did so; for soon the clouds gathered again, and a still more frightful storm raged within and around the city, once the pride, now the warning of the whole of Europe.

How that storm will end, none even now can tell; but surely all must join in praying that He who putteth down one, and exalteth another, in whose hands is the government of the whole earth, will bring order out of chaos, and restore the blessing of Peace to the once fair land of France.

THE CHILDREN'S SOCIETY.

THE CHILDREN'S SOCIETY.

"BE quiet, Dan! Pussy'll wake up if you speak," said Jack, in a loud whisper.

"I *will* throw it, myself," said Dan, in a still louder whisper.

"No, I am the oldest," cried Jack, suddenly forgetting to whisper at all; so Pussy, hearing the scuffle, and all at once roused from her nap on the grass, looked up at the boys' window. What did she see there but Jack and Dan Arnold struggling for a bowl of water, a good deal of which they had already lost on their jackets; and, knowing from past experience that the rest was probably intended

for her own glossy coat, Pussy beat a rapid retreat, and was soon safe under a currant-bush, where they could see her great green eyes peeping out at them.

"Look here, young ones, what mischief are you about now?" asked a voice, and a hand was laid on Jack's shoulder.

"Oh!" cried Jack, starting, and looking anything but pleased at the interruption; "well, you see, Cousin Will, it's all Dan's fault. I was going to throw the water as easy—as easy as—anything; and then Dan must needs come and put in his oar, and you know he's too young to duck a cat properly."

"Yes, I know he is," said Will, "and I know something else, too,—that *you* are too young or too old, or something, to torment that poor old cat, Master Jack."

Jack looked rather ashamed, but didn't like to show it.

"Oh, I did it beautifully, yesterday, and it was such fun to see her take one skip in the air, and then shake her paws;—oh, real fun!" said Jack, trying to laugh off his confusion.

"Well, I should think it might be," said Will, thoughtfully. "I should like to try it too, but not on such small game as cats—I think a nice big boy about nine or ten years old would be more fun. Let me see, how old are you, Jack?" he asked, turning to the boy with a suddenness that made him start and move toward the door.

"Not so fast, young man," cried Will, taking him in his strong arms; "you know I wouldn't hurt you for anything, but it would be such fun to let the water down on you in the shower-bath, and see you skip about and shake your little paws."

Dan was by this time out of reach, in the hall, but he peeped through the crack of the door and giggled—to Jack's intense indignation.

"I've had one bath to-day," said he, doggedly, "and that's a plenty."

"Oh, did you suppose I was thinking of your good, or my own fun?" asked Will. "Did you throw the water on Pussy yesterday because she had not had a bath for some

time, and you thought it was good for her health ?"

Jack writhed and struggled, but his cousin held him firmly.

"I think it's as bad for you to plague me as for me to plague the cat," said he, at last, giving two or three little jumps to get free.

"Oh, then you do think it was bad in you to tease her," said Will, quickly.

"Well, I s'pose so, but then only think how old you are—been in college ever so long, beat in a boat-race too, you know," said Jack, looking, for the first time, in Will's face, to see the effect of this little bit of flattery. "I do think you might hit a fellow of your own size."

"I don't intend to hit anybody, just now," said his cousin, the shadow of a smile turning up the corners of his mouth: "but now, Jack, just tell me, don't you really feel sorry for the poor cat? Think how cold the water must feel on her back; and you know cats hate water, cold or warm, a great deal more than boys do. You are sorry, aren't you?"

Jack didn't answer, at first. He was not an unkind boy, though he sometimes thoughtlessly did unkind things. He still thought it was "fun to see Pussy give a skip," but he reflected, for the first time, how unpleasant it must be to the poor cat herself. Then he fell to thinking, as he sat on his cousin's knee, his cousin's arms about him, how those same strong arms had gently carried him home when he had sprained his ankle, one day last spring, thought, in so doing, Will had had to give up a whole afternoon's pleasure; how, for days after, Will would sit reading aloud to him, instead of riding his new black horse; how kind Will always was to anything small, or weak, or suffering. Well then, if Will, who had done wonders in the gymnasium, if Will, who could beat in a boat-race, didn't think it beneath him to be kind to animals, Jack would reconsider the matter. So, after a long pause, Jack said, mumbling a little, to be sure:

"Well, I reckon Dan and I won't bother Prue any more."

Will laughed, gave Jack a toss in the air, set him down again, and then said:

"I've thought of a plan for you children, the whole lot of you; Mary, Dan, and all."

"Pic-nic?" piped Dan's little voice, through the crack of the door.

"Oh, you're out there, are you, Dan?" said Cousin Will, laughing again. "No, not that sort of plan at all. Call Mary and George, and I'll tell you."

Before long, the four children were gathered about their tall cousin, to hear the new plan.

"You know, children," said Will, "that some of the grown-up people have got up a society by which they hope to put a stop to a great deal of the cruelty which is flourishing in the world—cruelty to animals—horses and dogs, sheep and cows, and the like"—

"And cats and kittens, I s'pose," put in Dan, thoughtfully.

Will smiled and went on: "They have done a great deal of good already"—

"Stop a minute," said George, who was older than the other children, and liked to

criticise: "you said cruelty was flourishing; I thought flowers and things flourished."

"So do weeds; so do poisonous plants," said his cousin; "and cruelty is poisonous—poisonous both to the victims and the persecutors."

"There, George," said Jack, much impressed by the last long word, "you'd better not talk again unless you have something worth saying—sometimes *people* flourish, you know."

George wisely took no notice, and Will continued:

"I was saying that the grown-up people had done a great deal of good already, and there is no reason why you young ones shouldn't try the same plan, though in a different way, perhaps."

"Oh yes, I should like that," cried Mary, and Jack added: "We'll tell you when one of the others does anything, and then you can fine 'em, just as they do in court."

"No, I won't have anything to do with it, if it's going to make you tell tales of each other," said Will, "but what I propose is that

each one of you shall watch himself and his own doings, and then there'll be no need of your watching each other. There isn't one of you four who would tell a lie or deceive in any way, so I can trust you all."

"Well, about the fines?" asked Mary.

"Oh yes, the fines," said Will. "If one of you ever *should* be unkind to an animal, you can fine yourself five cents"—

"Oh, Cousin Will!" cried Jack; "you're grown up, you know, so you've forgotten what a lot five cents really is."

"Well, one cent at a time, then: and now you must decide what to do with the fines."

"Buy peanuts," suggested Dan.

"No, that would be for ourselves," replied Mary, "so that wouldn't do at all."

"Buy something for Prue or the dogs," was Jack's proposal.

"Father and mother give them they all want," said George.

"Hadn't we better give the money to the McElroys—the poor family who haven't got many clothes?" asked Mary.

"Oh yes, said the other children, "that's just the thing."

"Well," said their cousin, "so you've settled it as you like, have you? It's the only way in which I wish the McElroys may not prosper. Will you let me belong to your society?"

"Oh, you're too old, Cousin Will, aren't you?" said Mary. "Besides, you wouldn't be worth much in the way of fines, because you are never cruel to anything."

"Nor you either, little one," said Will; "if only unkind people are to belong, you must resign, at once."

"I am too old, too, I think," said George, his hands in his pockets; whereat Mary laughed so merrily that he changed his mind on the spot.

"We may all of us do unkind things thoughtlessly," said their cousin, "though I don't believe any one of us would ever intend to do anything cruel. For instance, a boy might whip a tired horse, thinking he was lazy or obstinate"—

"Well, I reckon I'll belong," said George,

hastily interrupting, and coloring deeply. "I suppose we are to begin right off."

"I think you had better," replied Will, "and when I come home again, next Saturday, I shall like to know how you get along."

When next Saturday came, there were but two pennies to begin the fund for the McElroys. Jack and Dan, the chief mischief-makers of the family, had been discovered tying a spool on Prue's tail for the kittens to play with. The kittens chased the poor old cat about: the cat grew angry and boxed the kittens' ears, till there was a sad scene of discord in the cat family,

"Maeow!" yelled Prue, clawing one of the kittens: "spurt—fuff!"

"Mew, mew!" cried the little one, her head aching with the blow.

Fortunately, at this moment, Mary ran down the steps, untied the spool, stroked Prue, and trailed a string to comfort the kittens.

"'Twasn't any harm, was it?" asked Jack.

"The spool wouldn't have stayed on if you hadn't tied it tight enough to hurt Prue"—

"Well, I'm sorry," said Jack.

And that was the way the two pennies were laid up for the poor people: one by Jack, and the other by Dan.

As time went on, the McElroys would have had a hard time of it, if they had depended entirely upon the "Children's Society," for Will's plan had the effect which he had hoped, in making the boys less thoughtless and more gentle toward the dumb creatures about them, and so there were very few fines.

Little Dan felt very important when he reflected that he belonged to a society very much like that got up by the grown people, and thought, in spite of his Cousin Will's advice, that it would be rather a fine thing for him to do just as they did. He had heard his father read from a newspaper an account of a gentleman interfering between an ill-tempered teamster and his over-worked horse, and now determined to be on the watch for a chance to do good in the same way.

He had not long to wait. A few days afterward, a farmer was returning from market with his empty cart, when, just as he came in front of Mr. Arnold's house, his horse stopped short, and refused to go farther. The farmer snapped his whip in vain: the horse would only prance and curvet without going forward a single step. If Dan had been a little older and wiser, he would have seen at once that the horse was still fresh, but so young and frisky that he preferred his own way to his master's. Dan, however, did not think of this, but, only remembering the newspaper paragraph and his own determination, boldly trotted down the steps, and confronted the farmer.

"You better not!" said he, shaking his curls.

"Eh?" said the farmer, who was rather deaf.

"I 'dvise you not to," shouted Dan, threateningly.

"What yer say, sonnie?" asked the farmer, in such a pleasant voice that the little boy felt rather ashamed.

"I say," he answered, his face flushing, "I say, I'm going to take the number of your cart."

"Want to take a ride in my cart? Wal, jump in, then, I'll h'ist you up, but you won't get much of a ride, I'm afeared: the horse is dretful contrairy. Hop in, sonnie."

"I b'long to a society," said Dan, very loud, and drawing himself up, "and we don't let people beat their horses."

This speech might have been a very fine one for a grown-up man, but Dan was very short and fat, and the words sounded oddly enough coming from his little round mouth. The farmer heard, at last, and being a very good-natured man, laughed instead of being angry.

"Haw! haw!" he shouted. "Wal, if that ain't a good one! You're a fine old gentleman, you are. I'll come and look on when you drive your four-in-hand. I wa'n't a beatin' of him, sonnie, only kind of snappin' of the whip."

At this moment, much to Dan's relief, the

frisky horse took it into his head to make a sudden start for home, and the farmer drove rapidly away, turning his head for a moment to call out:

"Goodby, grandfather; my respects to your society!"

Dan retired to the house, crestfallen and depressed; but he had learned a useful lesson, namely, not to meddle with older persons' affairs, and always to remember that there may be two sides to a question.

He did not feel sad long, however, for, on going out to the barn-yard for a play, he found that his father had just brought home a rabbit as a present to Jack. It was a pretty creature, and beginning to be quite tame, for Mr. Arnold had had it several days already. Its foot had been caught in a trap, but it was not otherwise hurt. Mr. Arnold had bought it of the Indian who had trapped it, and was now doing his best by careful treatment to cure the injured paw.

"You must take good care of him, Jackie," his father was saying, as Dan came by: "be

sure that he has enough to eat, and always keep plenty of fresh straw in his house."

"Where can I keep him, papa?"

"Brown shall make a regular rabbit house as soon as he has time. If you take good care of this little fellow, perhaps I may get a few more to keep him company. Until the new pen is ready, you may have the old hen-house: you see I have put it on the top of two barrels. Be careful to keep the door securely fastened, or he may fall out."

"Yes, indeed," said Jack; "isn't he a beauty, Dan? I'm going to be very kind to him, so you can learn how to treat animals by watching me."

"He has learned one way from you already, Jack," said George, who had come out to look at the new treasure: "it was you who taught him to chase the pigs, you know."

"His foot isn't quite well yet, is it, papa?" asked Jack, suddenly.

"Nearly so, and it will not need much more care. Now you understand, Jack, that you are to take the sole charge of him yourself,

and be sure that he always has enough to eat."

"Oh yes, sir, I'll remember," said Jack promptly, and I know he meant to remember, but so many things may happen to put such a small creature as a rabbit out of a little boy's mind.

The rabbit was beautifully cared for, for as much as a fortnight; but as the novelty wore off of possessing such a pet, Jack grew careless of his comfort, and sometimes would forget to feed him. Once he neglected him for two days together, and on the third morning, when he opened the door of the hen-house, the rabbit was so hungry that he jumped forward to get the lettuce leaves as soon as possible. In jumping, poor Bunnie fell to the ground, and seemed stunned for a moment, not trying to run away, or even to move; but when Jack had lifted him up, and put him back into the house, he began to eat, and seemed quite like himself again. As Jack stood watching him, Brown came up and said that the new house was quite done—would

Master Jack like to move the rabbit? Oh yes, Jack could not wait, Bunnie must finish his breakfast in his new house: and so Bunnie was carefully moved by Brown, and Jack left him nibbling away most contentedly.

Early the next morning, Jack ran out to see how the rabbit liked the new house, but he found Brown already there, kneeling by the open door.

"Why, Brown, what *are* you doing? Bunnie'll run right away."

"No sir, no hope of that," said the man, looking up and shaking his head; "he'll never run again. His little life is over, Master Jack."

Jack burst into tears as he saw his poor little pet lying stiff and cold on the ground.

"Oh Brown!" he cried; "is he really dead? What have you done to him?"

"I didn't do anything," answered the man, "but I think it's maybe the fall he had yesterday. He seemed sort of stunned like, you know, Master Jack."

Jack knew it only too well, and his cruel

neglect of the innocent little creature rushed to his mind. For a moment he stood perfectly quiet, the tears running down his cheeks, as he looked at the little form, yesterday so warm and full of life—to-day so cold and still. Then, raising it gently in his arms, he laid it against his cheek, carried it to his father, and told him all about it.

"Oh papa," said he, sobbing, "if I hadn't let him be hungry, he wouldn't have tried to jump, and then he wouldn't have tumbled down. I am so unhappy, papa; I think I should feel better if you were to punish me."

"I think you have had punishment enough, my boy," said his father, "though perhaps you would be less likely to forget, if you went at once to tell George and Dan that the rabbit's death happened through your fault."

"Oh, not George, please, papa! He does say such things. Don't you remember the day you brought Bunnie home, and what I said to Dan?"

"I thought you wanted a punishment."

"Yes, sir," replied Jack, meekly, and went in search of his brothers.

Tender-hearted Dan was only kind and sympathizing upon hearing the sad tale; and though George raised his eyebrows and looked severe, at first, he was soon melted by Jack's penitence, and devoted himself to comforting his brother. Mary laid the rabbit in a box, and they buried him near a bush in Jack's garden.

About a month after Bunnie's death, the children's Uncle John, for whom Jack was named, came to see Mr. Arnold. When he went away, he gave Jack a dollar, to do what he liked with, and for five minutes Jack was very busy thinking how he would spent it to please himself.

He would take out ten cents for some sugar-plums for Mary, and five cents for Dan's favorite peanuts. Cousin Will and George should each have a present, and then there would be a good deal left to himself. But suddenly Jack became very serious.

"What's the matter, Jackie?" asked Cousin

Will, who was standing near. "You haven't lost your dollar, have you?"

"No, but let me tell you, please. I was just thinking of all the times I let poor Bunnie go hungry, you know, and I never paid any fine at all—I forgot all about it: and when he died—it was so dreadful—I don't mean that even a lot of dollars could make up, but—don't you understand, Cousin Will?"

"I have an idea of what you mean, I think," said Will, kindly.

"Well, I can't explain exactly, but I mean I want to show—not to show off, either, but to show to myself—that I'm too sorry for what I've done to count every cent and see how much I owe for fines; so I mean to give the McElroys the whole dollar, and not tell anybody, either, but just you."

"Ho!" said George, suddenly putting his head in at the window; "a dollar isn't so very much. I know a fellow who's got three, and he's going to save 'em up to buy a watch."

"I would rather Jack should give part of

his money away, for he won't need a watch for several years," said Will, putting his hand on Jack's shoulder; "it shows a noble spirit to wish to do so secretly. But, Jackie, boy, have you a right to give away the dollar? You know Uncle John meant that you should buy something with it."

"Oh yes, I know he meant that I should do precisely what I liked with it; he said so."

The dollar was invested in caps for the McElroy boys. Mrs. Arnold added some cast-off jackets, and, with these presents and a basket of groceries, Jack and Dan started off to make a call on the poor family, on the next Saturday afternoon.

The McElroys were delighted with their presents, and the little boys left them, feeling that they had made sad hearts happier in a very easy way.

On the way home, Dan said: "Jackie, don't you think I ought to tell the farmer I'm sorry I said that about his horse?"

"Why, yes; perhaps you'd better, only I

s'pose he's forgotten all about it, by this time. Well, come along, if you want to," and the two children turned back toward the large farmhouse where the man lived.

They had not gone far when they met him driving the same frisky young horse which had so excited Dan's sympathy a few weeks before. Now, to be sure, it was not quite so gay as when we first made its acquaintance, and it was willing to stand quite still for Jack and Dan to get upon the wagon; for the farmer, seeing the two boys and a basket wandering along the road, asked all three to get in and take a ride. Jack and Dan clambered up the side of the wagon, the man helping them and the basket with his strong hand, and they were soon driving merrily along the road, Jack at one end of the seat, the farmer at the other, and Dan in the middle.

"Isn't it lucky we met him?" asked Jack. "Now's your chance, Dan; speak loud, for I think he's deaf."

Dan had been thinking what to say for some minutes past; so now he raised himself on his

hands, so as to be as near as possible to the farmer's ear, and shouted :

"I'm glad we met you ; we were just going to see you, this afternoon."

The man looked very much surprised, and stared at Dan, while the little boy continued :

"Will you be so kind enough to 'scuse me,"—and then the rest of his little speech went quite out of his mind.

"What-say, bub?" asked the farmer, much puzzled.

"I mean I'm sorry I said you were beating the horse, that day, you know."

"Wal now, do tell ! If you ain't that same little chap as said he belonged to a society, just like them big folks down to the city. Dear me, now!" and the man laughed so heartily that Dan hung his head and blushed.

"Wal now, sonnie," said the farmer kindly, "you don't really think that I was a beatin' of the critter, do you? I wouldn't any sooner hit him a blow more'n he needed, than I'd hit you, little one."

"No, sir," said Dan, "I know you wouldn't."

"I'm often thinkin' of what the Bible says about a man bein' 'merciful to his beast,' and I believe *my* beasts do have mercy shown 'em. How does that 'society' of yourn get on, sonnie?"

"Oh, we got a lot of money for fines," said Dan; "and we've just been taking the McElroys some caps we bought with it."

"The McElroys are poor people, you know," said Jack, "and the two boys are out of work, so they haven't much to live on."

"Out of work, are they?" said the man, thoughtfully. "I don't know but what I might find a place for one of them on the farm. How old are they?"

"The oldest is fourteen," replied Jack, "and such a nice boy. Papa has been trying to find a situation for him, but I don't think he knows you. Our father is Mr. Arnold."

Oh yes, I know. Wal, I'll come and ask him about the young fellow on my way back from the village, to-night, and if he's really a good boy, and needs the work, I think I can find enough for him to do."

"What a nice man!" said Jack, as the farmer put the children down at their own door.

"Yes," replied Dan, thoughtfully. "I never will be impertinent to grown-up people again. It was very naughty, wasn't it, Jackie?"

"I suppose it was, but you meant it all right, and you're sorry for it now, and that's a good thing. If you hadn't begged the man's pardon, he might never have known about James McElroy, and given him a place on the farm."

So more good than little came from the "Children's Society," for, in a few days, the good farmer did find work for James, and, in course of time, for his brother also. Every horse and dog upon Mr. Arnold's estate knew, before long, that it would be sure to receive nothing but gentle treatment at the hands of the boys; and, though there were very few pennies put by for the poor as fines from ungentle hands, there were very many sent away as free gifts from the kind hearts of the Arnold boys.

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